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The Letters of Marius: or,
Reflections upon the Peace, the
East-India Bill, and the Present
Crisis

By
Thomas Day

FOR READING ROOM ONLY

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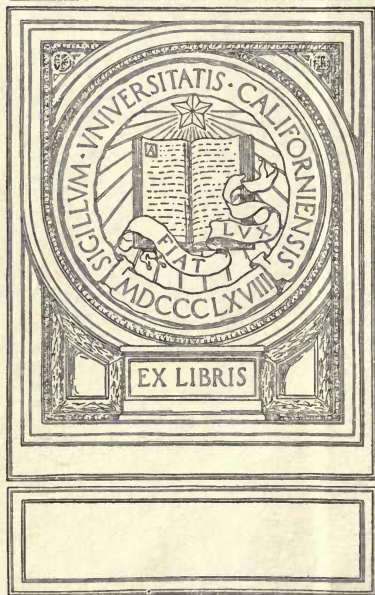
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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT LOS ANGELES



T H E
LETTERS OF MARIUS:
OR,
R E F L E C T I O N S
UPON THE
P E A C E,
T H E
E A S T - I N D I A B I L L,
A N D T H E
P R E S E N T C R I S I S;
By THOMAS DAY, Esq.

— Non ante revellar,
Exanimem quam te complectar, Roma, tuumque
Nomen libertas, et inanem prosequar umbram.

F O U R T H E D I T I O N.

L O N D O N:
PRINTED FOR J. STOCKDALE,
OPPOSITE BURLINGTON HOUSE, PICCADILLY.

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IT is necessary to give a reason why the following reflections are published under the fictitious name of MARIUS. They were originally intended to be printed in the public papers, and the first five letters were written before the author changed his plan. But the bulk into which they insensibly swelled, made them seem more adapted to the form under which they now appear : at the same time neither the urgency of the present crisis, nor the variety of subjects to be treated, allowed him to melt them down anew, and give them the uniformity of a continued essay. The necessity of immediately presenting such sentiments as these, if they are presented at all, to the public, has also induced the author to publish with a precipitation, which he would otherwise disapprove.

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It is necessary to give a reason why the following reflections are published under the fictitious name of *M. R. V.* They were originally intended to be printed in the public papers, and the first five letters were written before the author changed his plan. But the bulk into which they necessarily swelled, made them seem more adapted to the form under which they now appear: at the same time, whether the urgency of the present crisis, or the variety of subjects to be treated, allowed him to treat them down anew, and give them the uniformity of a continued essay. The necessity of immediately presenting such important truths, if they are presented at all to the public, has also induced the author to publish with a preface, which he would otherwise have dispensed with.

T H E

LETTERS OF MARIUS,
&c.

L E T T E R I.

To Dr. J E B B.

John?

S I R,

IF, in the most dangerous crisis, the consul Varro was thought to deserve the thanks of the Roman people whose very existence he had endangered, merely, “quod non desperasset de republicâ,” with what honours should the English nation exalt your name?—In the midst of dangers, so much the more formidable as the internal corruption of any state is more to be feared than every external shock, your uniform conduct has been to animate by your

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example,

example, and to enlighten by your understanding, the wavering and dejected minds of your countrymen. While this has uniformly been your public conduct, your private example seems destined to rescue the injured term of Patriotism from the unmerited ridicule which had been brought upon it by the treachery of its pretended friends.

While every rash adventurer, while every ruined libertine, could find a beneficial trade in duping the credulity of the people; while every broken author, gambler, pimp, or parasite, when deprived of the hope of subsisting by his honest industry, could promise himself a decent subsistence, if not the enjoyment of his favourite vices, by enlisting himself under the banners of the popular cause, it was no wonder that cause should be so often abandoned and betrayed as we have seen it. But, if we lament the misapplication of the public confidence, in a variety of instances, we must, at least, allow that the evil has not been unproductive of utility. There is a limit beyond which credulity itself will not submit to be deceived; and that limit the English people have happily attained. I have not yet heard that the political qualms of Lord North against secret influence, and the harangues of Mr. Fox in favour of a parliamentary majority,

majority, have made a single profelyte out of their own virtuous house. There, indeed, a saving faith, according to the true orthodox form of "*Credo quia impossibile*," has given a wonderful efficacy to the word; and many a stubborn infidel, who would not have believed "even though one had risen from the dead," has already yielded to the bare promise of a shower of manna, or a second miracle of the loaves and fishes. But with the body of the people the case is widely different. They have learned to attend to the stubborn voice of facts, as well as to the more soothing notes of oratorical persuasion. They demand a certain consistency of life and manners, the delicate colouring of private honesty and integrity, to fill up the flowing outline of public profession, and to make it worthy of a people's admiration. This, sir, is what envy itself will not deny to be your undisputed claim. The English people, therefore, receive you as their undoubted benefactor, and, whatever may be the consequence of your exertions, allow you all the glory which is due to the purity and disinterestedness of your intentions.

But it is not enough, in public contests, to have gained the clearest praise of integrity, unless we can add to it that of discretion and

judgment. Cato expiated, within the walls of Utica, the ill-timed deference which he had shewn to Scipio; and Cicero paid with his blood the price of his fond idolatry of Octavius. The English people, that have been always doomed to expiate either the treachery or the pusillanimity of their leaders, will find it difficult to determine which of these qualities has produced the greatest mischief. While the one has given up all their rights at the very moment when they might have been established, the other has repeatedly checked them in their most successful career, with ideal difficulties, and delays, which are always friendly to usurpation as they are dangerous to liberty.

Never did this appear more evident than in the year 1779, which gave birth to the associations of the people. Wearied out at that time with the absurd conduct of an unjust war, into which they had been betrayed by every species of falsehood and misrepresentation, they turned their eyes, with a gratitude little short of adoration, upon that sudden light which unexpectedly rose upon their darkened horizon. Nor can it be doubted, that it was much less the people who were then wanting to their own cause, than that they were, as usual, deserted by their leaders. A few, a very few disinterested men, among
whom

whom it will ever be your praise to have been the foremost, stood forth, and called the public attention to the radical and inveterate corruptions of the constitution. "In vain," said they to that body of the gentry and nobility which supported the cause of opposition, "do you attempt to palliate, or temporize with your disease. In vain do you distract the attention of the people upon the trifling details of their government, and cheat them with idle visions of œconomical reforms. Were the public miseries occasioned either by accidental incapacity, or accidental misfortune, we might hope for relief from time, and spare ourselves the trouble of exertion ; but, where a long unbroken series of events has been unfolded, all tending to the same end, and that end the depression of the people and the destruction of their rights, it calls for all our vigilance and virtue. Even now, the measure of our wrongs is full ; nor have we any remaining hope but from courage founded upon despair. For whom will ye invoke in this extremity of distress, but yourselves?—Will ye prefer your petitions to the throne which has so often spurned, so often rejected them ; and hope that a sovereign will undertake the patronage of public freedom, when it is no longer defended by the spirit of a nation ?

History

History, indeed, commemorates sovereigns who have practised the virtues and the philosophy of private life, who have loved their friends, pardoned their enemies, and endured the approach of truth ; some have even descended from their thrones, and sought for happiness in obscurity : but the example is yet wanting of a prince who has lost an opportunity of increasing his power, or resigned the usurpations of his predecessors.

“ But according to the principles of the English constitution, you have little either to hope or to fear from the private qualities of a sovereign : or, rather, by an happy fiction which makes every minister that shares the executive power answerable for his own omissions, the prince may enjoy all the reverence of his virtues, while his name is never compromised by the guilty projects of ambition. But however implicitly we may admit the maxim, That a king can do no wrong, flattery itself has never yet applied it to his servants ; and should we appeal to experience, it may perhaps be doubted whether the impeccability of the sovereign is not compensated by a contrary quality in his ministers. Nothing then remains but that ye use the only check which the constitution has provided, and order your representatives to impeach the guilty

author's

authors of your miseries. But, alas ! such is the peculiar unhappiness of our situation, that those whom we should apply to for redress are the very authors of our misfortunes. For is there a single minister, that has insulted the patience or eluded the vengeance of the people, that is not fenced in by a majority of those who call themselves your representatives ? What measure has been so stigmatized by public detestation, so openly inimical to the liberties and interests of a free people, as not to be sanctified by a majority of that honourable house ? If we take their whole successive conduct, from their open and indecent attacks upon the dearest privileges of the people in the Middlesex election, down to their premeditated invasion of the American rights, and all the subsequent horrors of the civil war in which we are now engaged, is there a single action worthy of the generosity, greatness, or understanding of the English people ?—Nor do we found our opinion upon vague surmise or uncertain conjecture. Whatever undoubted virtue and ability this country can boast in its public councils, whatever characters of superior lustre, have all combined in vain to stem the torrent ; and they now appeal from the venal votes of a corrupt majority to the sober and unbiassed suffrages of the

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the people. Who can doubt the integrity, the disinterestedness, more than the talents of a Fox, and Burke? And when you behold the fruitless efforts of men like these, to point their country's thunders at the head of its implacable foe, and hear them publicly assert that wisdom and ability alike are vain; that all the former spirit of our parliament is evaporated, and has left nothing behind but blind fervility to a minister, can we hesitate to admit the fatal truth? —No! could there yet remain a doubt, we feel it in the degradation of our country, and the increasing misery of its inhabitants.—Rouse then, if ever, ye last remaining hopes of liberty, and unite for its defence!”

MARIUS.

LET

L E T T E R II.

To Dr. J E B B.

S I R

WHOEVER would write adequately concerning public affairs, must not confine his attention to the present moment, but must include a series of past events, as necessary to establish his opinions both of the present and the future. With this intention, I recurred, in my last letter, to the year 1779, and gave a summary of what was then addressed to the people, by those who coincided in your sentiments of the cause of national grievances: I shall now drop the third person, and proceed, in my own, to submit to the judgment of the public the arguments in favour of correcting the representation of the people which were then used; and which are now necessary to be remembered, if we wish for any adequate remedy to the evils which surround us.

History furnishes us with a variety of forms in which the human species have existed under
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different modifications both of tyranny and freedom. Indeed, every thing is so mixed in human affairs, that it is perhaps impossible to produce an instance of any government which is purely either the one, or the other. Scarcely any arbitrary government exists, which is not limited in its excesses, either by the prejudices of manners or religion; scarcely any free one which does not contain within itself the seeds of its own future destruction. This consideration has given wonderful scope to the ingenuity of those who wish to confound the understandings of men, and to misrepresent the plainest facts. You that, for the sake of alleviating the real miseries of your fellow-creatures, are continually obliged to consider those miseries in their most hideous forms, know that nothing is more difficult than to define the precise boundaries of health and disease: yet the wildest sceptic will not deny that these ideas have a real existence, and that it is the essential interest of man to investigate them with all the accuracy he possesses.

In politics, it must be confessed, we can scarcely proceed a step, without finding equal cause to lament the imperfect nature of past experience, and the yet more imperfect manner in which it is recorded. But in what science,
unless

unless it be pure mathematics, can we pretend to certainty, or even accuracy? The conduct of life, therefore, must either be permitted to probability, or left to fluctuate at random. And, if we observe the common behaviour of our fellow-creatures, we must acknowledge that they do not so much suffer from the scantiness of their materials, as from a want of diligence and judgment in application of them.

Without involving myself, therefore, in all the subtleties of metaphysical distinctions, I shall simply observe, that one common fact is universally found in every free government; a public and legal method, by which the spirit of the nation at large may declare itself to its governors, and either confirm or alter the course of measures. Wherever we turn our eyes, I assert that this circumstance has been always found to accompany public liberty, and to measure its extent and duration: nor is there a single example, in history, of any country that has not been enslaved the very moment when it suffered either violence or cajolery to deprive it of this inestimable privilege.

Nor will it, perhaps, be loss of time, if I pause here to answer a common sophism which I have remarked in all the writers on the other side of the question. Government, they, indeed, al-

low to be a trust, and to be exercised for the good of the people ; but as to the actual consent and will of the people themselves, they place it entirely out of the question. They select, with wonderful ingenuity and perseverance, all the instances of popular fury, caprice, and ingratitude, which they can find in history, to contrast them with the most favourable periods of arbitrary government ; and then they triumphantly ask, whether all these outrages and excuses compose freedom, while justice, order, and humanity as naturally constitute servitude. But this is either a wilful, or involuntary confusion of ideas. There can be no doubt but there are periods in the life of every individual, when it might be more conducive to his interest to be under the controul of a discreet friend, than abandoned to the weakness and inexperience of his own judgment. No doubt, but there are many instances in which you could extend the benefits of the medical art, were you able to enforce your precepts of regimen and exercise by a salutary degree of restraint ; but will any one argue so inaccurately as, for that reason, to assert, that men would become more free by being subjected to the arbitrary will of a physician, in all that concerned their health ; more especially, were one of his subalterns daily
to

to feel their pulse, in order to determine the alterations which took place ?

In truth, nothing can be more inaccurate than to produce the mischiefs which may sometimes arise from liberty, or the advantages which may accidentally result from slavery, as a reason for confounding the ideas. The man is certainly more free than the child, although in many instances it might be for his advantage still to tremble at the ferula ; and the American savage, even while he is perishing for hunger in his native woods, than the best-fed negro of the islands. But to argue with any regard for accuracy or logic, the battery should be changed ; and it must be maintained, that it is really more for the interest of any nation to abandon its claim to liberty, than to submit to the inconveniences of preserving it. This is the supposition which, under a variety of disguises, has been frequently obtruded upon the press ; and therefore I will bestow some consideration upon it, that I may not be afterwards interrupted in the progress of these letters.

I have often thought it a wonderful fallacy of some divines to depreciate human reason in order to exalt religion : for, unless that religion be imparted by particular inspiration to every individual, what other method is there of establishing it, than proofs adapted to his reason ? The more,
there-

therefore, you convince him of the weakness and fallibility of that faculty, the more you must incline him, were he consistent, to doubt his power of judging concerning the particular evidence you propose. But this fallacy does not seem to be confined to the venerable order of the clergy. Politicians practise it at least with equal success, when they descant upon the blindness and ignorance of, what they call, the multitude. The passions of mankind, they tell you, are so strong, and their reasoning powers so weak, that nothing but anarchy and confusion can result from their being permitted to govern themselves. What then is the remedy? Would one not expect that they would bring some god or angel down to take the management of affairs upon himself, and atone for human imperfections? But here they are inferior to their friends the clergy. Instead of this device, they have only the very contemptible one of selecting a small part of the species, who are not only to govern themselves, but all the rest. So that this unavoidable contradiction arises from the supposition; mankind are totally incapable of governing themselves, yet they are not only capable of governing themselves, but millions of others at the same time. Nor is it possible to avoid this consequence, by asserting that certain individuals excel in prudence

dence and wisdom, and therefore are by nature adapted for this purpose : for what are the marks that distinguish these individuals, and who is to judge of their authenticity ? If the bulk of mankind is too gross and blind to decide concerning this superior excellence, it must be some-body else that determines for it. But how are we to distinguish these few, that, like the Venetian electors, are to chuse for all the rest ; and that without a previous election, or even a form of ballot ? If it be merely the few, in opposition to the many, it will be possible to divide the largest number till you reduce it to the smallest ; but it is an original idea to suppose that ignorance and stupidity may be divided and sub-divided, till they become knowledge and understanding.

But here is the general fallacy both of divines and politicians : both begin by teaching you to distrust yourself, and address themselves, if I may use the expression, to the hypocondriacism of human nature. When their representations have succeeded to a certain degree, they give you to understand that the only cure for all your evils is to adopt their own particular system either of faith or government. What is orthodoxy, true religion, and the will of heaven, on the one side ; or heresy, schism, and idolatry on the other ? — The particular opinions which
every

every divine holds forth, or which he chuses to condemn.—In the words of Hudibras,

“ What makes all doctrines plain and clear ?

“ About two hundred pounds a year.”

Thus if you demand of the politician what is order, good government, and political wisdom? Will he not answer, if he speak truth, the submission of mankind to the particular opinions which I entertain, or which I am paid for disseminating.—If, on the contrary, what is rebellion, faction, sedition, treason?—Different degrees of the opinions which either my avarice or ambition would prove false. But should you press him further, he must be compelled either to admit the general right of all the species to judge as well as act for themselves, or else to involve himself in inextricable contradictions.

M A R I U S.

LETTER

LETTER III.

To Dr. J E B B.

SIR

HE that builds, from caprice or vanity, may content himself with the flimsy decorations and patch-work ornaments of modern taste. However weak may be the foundations, however frail the materials, the edifice will be the wonder of a day, and may then unheeded crumble into ruins. Had I intended these papers to be the auxiliaries of party, or the instruments of private ambition, I had hastened to seize the perishable topic of the hour, before it gave place to the next new object of fashionable pursuit and wonder. But however vain may be the attempt, however inadequate my ambition, I have proposed to myself an higher object: I aim at placing that solid information before the public, which may guide their judgment, and direct their conduct. I shall too soon be obliged to quit the peaceful walks of speculation for the crooked and dangerous labyrinths of modern statesmen and politicians.

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However strong may be the arguments in favour of political liberty which are produced by the understanding alone, those which are derived from experience will give them additional force.

Man is forbidden by the laws of his organization to aspire at immortality ; yet why should dissolution be equally the fate of every human institution ? May we not conceive a society established on such a basis, as to brave the shocks of time ; and to remain, like the several species of the animal world, immortal and incorruptible, though composed of a thousand perishable generations ?

Alas ! it will be answered, human institutions, though at longer intervals, are equally mortal with the individuals that compose them. To raise an eternal fabric, with materials that are in a continual state of fluctuation and decay, is a vainer attempt than “to build a city and a tower whose top may reach unto Heaven.”

What government is recorded, within the annals of time, so wisely framed, so solidly established, as not to have degenerated into tyranny ; and what tyranny that has not soon been overturned, by relaxing all the springs of national defence, and enfeebling the community in order to enslave it ? Nay, the very institutions of Heaven itself, the instant they were entrusted to human passions for their support, have scarcely met
with

with a different fate, or constituted an exception. The first apostles of christianity were mild and lowly, like the founder of their faith. They addressed themselves to the reason of men, and propagated their religion by persuasion. They abjured the luxuries and the enjoyments of sense; they submitted to every insult; they refused the offered benefits of their friends, and deprecated, only by prayers and blessings, the malice of their enemies. But mark the change! The instant a royal convert has given the clergy entrance to a court, they abjure every principle of their religion. Then we lose sight of a suffering, and begin the æra of a triumphant church. The immediate successors of fishermen and mechanics consent to be cloathed in purple and scarlet, to wallow in all the sensualities of the most abandoned age and country, and to disgrace the simplicity of the most spiritual religion, by the rites and ceremonies of the grossest. The power of consulting about the interpretation of the articles of their religion, which was expressly given to the whole body of christians, is, in a short time, monopolized by the clergy; and the power of chusing their pastors and bishops, a right equally deducible from equity, history, reason, and the scriptures, taken from the laity, and shared between the hierarchy and the civil power. And this system of practice

and belief, so grossly adulterated, so totally unlike the original, is called Christianity, and enforced by racks, and flames, and gibbets; the antient supporters of civil, and now the welcome auxiliaries of ecclesiastical power. What may we suppose would have been the state of christianity at the present hour, had not the daring and original genius of Luther reduced it something nearer to its original principles, in the sixteenth century? What may we suppose will be its state in the twentieth, should no new Luther arise to teach our clergy the distance between the house of the Lord and the courts of princes, the difference between the service of God and mammon?

But I foresee that some of my readers may here exclaim, All this may be true, but what is it to the purpose? You are writing upon government and political liberty, why then deviate to the abuses and corruptions of christianity?—Because the history of christianity, a perfect and recorded succession of facts, which every man may consider at his leisure, is the best illustration in the universe of the subject on which I am writing. Because, if neither the immediate doctrines of Heaven itself, nor its positive commands, have been able to preserve even a christian clergy from every corruption which can grow upon the selfish passions, what are we to expect will be the
fate

fate of institutions merely human, if once abandoned to the avarice, ambition, and indolence of those who have an equal interest to pervert them?

While, therefore, I plead the cause of truth, and defend the interest of the human species, the wider my range, the more extensive my observations, the greater will be the force of those conclusions which I shall establish upon the united evidence of speculation, reason, and practical experience.

The favourers of a parliamentary reform have been repeatedly attacked with all the virulence of anonymous selfishness and malevolence. They are “idle speculatists, nursed in the gloom of solitude and ignorance,” “men of despicable abilities,” “of neither fortune or consequence,” “actuated by private interest and malevolence,” and an hundred other characters equally liberal and candid.—If they indeed be all this, and the substance of a thousand other invectives which have been lavished upon them, no doubt from the *purest motives*, they certainly deserve the contempt of all their countrymen. But let the matter be brought fairly to issue before that public which is appealed to. MARIUS is the last and meanest of that body. Should he be foiled, an hundred abler champions are ready to enter the field, and the cause which he maintains will receive no disgrace

disgrace from the weakness of its defender. But, should the arguments which he adduces remain unconfuted, what will the public think of the courage of his adversaries, or of the justice of their cause?

“ Each fearless hero dares an hundred foes,
 “ While the feast lasts, and while the goblet flows;
 “ But who to meet one martial man is found,
 “ When the fight rages, and the flames surround? ”

POPE'S ILIAD.

Some of these gentlemen are famous for their metaphysical acuteness. Let them therefore descend into the field, and prove the falsity of the principles which I have laid down. If they can be confuted, it will save me the trouble of proceeding in my course, and prosecuting an enquiry commenced under such inauspicious omens. Or, as they sometimes affect to despise speculation, and seem to imagine that all the understanding of the world is comprized in the dull routine of parliamentary business and opposition dinners, let them disprove this practical maxim upon which I rest the merits of the cause, “ That there is no instance of any body of men which have not abused whatever trusts were reposed in them, to the vilest purposes of selfishness, the instant they were not acted upon by some external force which kept them true to the purposes of their institution.”

Should

Should these points either not be denied, or being denied should not be adequately disproved by argument, I will take the liberty of stating the manner in which I intend to apply my principles, and the conclusion I shall attempt to establish.

In the first place, it is my opinion, as has been repeatedly affirmed by a majority of the nation, that the present House of Commons is no representation of the English people.

And this, I imagine, will be the more easily conceived even by my adversaries, as many of them; rather than grant the force of any argument in favour of public liberty, have chosen to deny that representation was any part of the English constitution;

In the second place, I assert, that, if the present House of Commons does not really represent the people, the people have no constitutional method of either effectually enforcing or opposing public measures.

In the third place, I will take the liberty of examining the conduct of those who are called the representatives of the people, particularly in respect to the celebrated East-India business.

And should I succeed in establishing the principles which I have here advanced, I shall submit it to the understanding of my countrymen, whether, while they are so tremblingly alive to the rights of
sovereigns

sovereigns and ministers, it does not become them to have some regard for their own.

I have addressed these letters to you, sir, because I think the esteem and gratitude of the public constitute the fit reward of virtuous actions. No one has exerted himself more strenuously, more disinterestedly, more uniformly. While Mr. —— appeared the champion of the people and their rights, you revered him with a zeal which I never thought his conduct deserved. But it is the clearest proof of your own integrity, that you have been able to relinquish those habitual delusions the instant you could be convinced they were misplaced. In respect to the resolutions brought forward at the last meeting of the quintuple alliance, I am convinced, they contain dangerous and salutary truths, little likely to be adopted by the indolence of this nation, but necessary to influence their conduct, if they aspire to continue a free people. To place this subject in the clearest light, and to bring it home to the hearts and understandings of my countrymen, is the only aim of

M A R I U S.

LET-

LETTER IV.

TO THE

Right Honourable the EARL of STAIR.

My LORD,

THERE is an ambition in the human mind, which may at least be pardoned; if not commended, of connecting itself with every object of public esteem. Poets have exhausted the comparison of the oak and ivy; and your lordship is too well acquainted with poetry as well as calculation, to need a reference to the particular passages. I am contented for once to be the subject of the allusion, and to have it supposed that MARIUS would rise to notice upon the blasts which spread your lordship's fame.

In your last pamphlet, you express a wish that the euthanasia of the English constitution may be a mild despotism. Had such a sentiment proceeded from any of the common reptiles that are engendered in the corruptions of a court, we should have only said, "The crea-

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ture's

ture's at his dirty work again," and passed it over in silent contempt: but when it proceeds from a man, who, apparently retired from human affairs, shrouds himself in his own integrity, and delivers oracular sayings from the precincts of consecrated groves, we surely must be as much astonished as the frightened heathen, that heard treachery recommended from the tripod of Apollo.

The public, my lord, have given you undoubted credit for the apparent zeal with which you opposed the American war. Considering the prejudices of your country, they allowed it to be no trifling effort. They even pardoned some little advances towards Lord North *, in consideration of the spirit with which you abused the majority of the parliament and the rest of the administration. But this was nothing more than had been already done by many of the most distinguished characters in the nation; nor
can

* " The noble lord has much in possession, more in reversion: happy in his family, happy in his fortune and abilities, with strong natural and social affections, no one must drink deeper of the bitter cup of national humiliation and ruin. In his public line of conduct I see, or fancy that I see, and in his alone, of all the ruthless ministerial tribe, some twitches of remorse,
some

can we therefore allow you the full merit of your modest insinuation: "It is the comfort, it is the glory of my life to have opposed, almost singly, in the beginning, that war, at the sure consequence and expence of all that has happened to me*."

Was your lordship ignorant, when you hazarded that assertion, that the American war had been openly opposed, not only by a considerable party in parliament, but by a numerous body of independent men in every quarter of the kingdom? That petitions had been sent from many of the trading towns and the counties of South Britain?

The ministerial writers of that ill-omened hour are full of menaces against the factious party at home that justified the resistance of the Americans. They first, we are told, lighted up the flame of rebellion; they afterwards gave new force to its half-extinguished violence; they dictated the resolutions of congress, the march of Washing-

some recollections of the fair feelings of humanity, some sweet drops of the milk of human kindness."

FACTS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES, p. 26.

I heard it observed, when this passage was first published, that his lordship must have seen all this by second sight; for not an Englishman could ever discover the least of all these wonders.

* An argument to prove, that it is the indispensable Duty, &c. by John, Earl of Stair, p. 24.

ton, the independence of America, and the eternal humiliation of their own country :

“ They hated, they despis’d, and they destroy.”

Does your lordship seriously believe that all this series of accusations relates to you alone ? That you were the only object of ministerial hatred, of party rancour, of American gratitude ? Or have you never yet heard the names of Richmond, Chatham, Camden, and even of Dr. Price ?

“ Me, me ! adsum qui feci, in me convertite ferrum.”

But, if you invest yourself with this pre-eminence, you should at least have fitted yourself to support with dignity the part you voluntarily assume. We can conceive Cato tearing out his own bowels, or Brutus, with his last breath, complaining that heaven had abandoned the cause of virtue ; but we cannot so easily conceive the last of Romans carrying up an address to welcome the conqueror from the plains of Pharsalia, and congratulating his triumphs over the constitution.

But this insinuation may perhaps be controverted by your lordship’s friends : let us try how far it can be brought home from the evidence of your own writings. He that never
omits

omits an opportunity of casting contempt and ridicule upon every expedient, one alone excepted, may fairly be imagined to think more highly of that exception, and to prefer it to all the rest. Interest, as well as vanity, may find out more paths than one of arriving at its ends ; and he is little acquainted with the world, who is ignorant that to degrade an enemy is often the same thing as to recommend a friend.

You have taken every opportunity, in the different tracts you have published, of expressing your contempt of all public characters, and of a great majority of the House of Commons. Let us hear your own words : “ The happy counterpoise of the different parts of our constitution is destroyed ; all responsibility is made a jest ; for, backed by a majority, paid to support, and paid to applaud their measures, be they what they may, ministers gather the roses without the cares or the thorns of power ; and from the number and rank, and even fortunes of the corrupted, fashion and ton is given to the basest prostitutions of principles and of talents*.”— Again : “ Was indeed, as in the days of our ancestors, the fable believed, of a bargain and sale to the Devil for temporary honours and

* Facts and their Consequences, p. 25.

emoluments,

emoluments, I much fear that the *prince of darkness* would hold a majority in the British parliament †."—I have selected these from a variety of passages equally strong and pointed, because I think they must be allowed to convey a very unequivocal idea of your sentiments. But if ministers, if even parliaments, are so radically corrupted, it can be neither from ministers nor parliaments, such as they are at present, that the nation is to expect its safety. Wherever the prince of darkness may obtain a majority, I will answer for it he will never want a substitute to manage affairs in his behalf.

One only alternative therefore remains, unless the nation ought to be entirely passive under such a complicated weight of injuries and calamities: it may insist upon reforming the corruptions of its representatives, or it may consent to abolish representation altogether, and take shelter in what you feelingly call "a mild despotism."—Should the few remaining friends of their country's liberties, for such friends *may* even now remain, adopt the former part of the alternative, it appears to me no reflection upon their *hearts*, and but little upon their *heads*.

† Attempt to balance the Income and Expenditure of the State, p. 18.

The bounds of possibility are little known to the ordinary part of mankind. The few superior minds that have enlarged them for the species, were looked upon at first as rash adventurers, who were only accelerating their own destruction. If the opinions of mankind are forcibly altered by success, it arises, I fear, less from justice than from vanity and meanness. They are willing to derive benefit from the labours and dangers which they began with decrying, and would establish the merit of having foreseen those discoveries which they have gravely pronounced impossible.

As to moral causes and their effects, they are a perpetual contradiction to the boasted powers of penetration. The wisest man in general sees but little before him, and frequently not at all. The objects are sometimes so dark, that it is impossible to distinguish them ; sometimes so luminous, that they dazzle the observer's eye ; and passion, prejudice, and superstition, are perpetually busy to change their colouring and alter their dimensions. If your lordship foresaw the independence of the Americans, when the British parliament as wantonly as foolishly chose to drive them to extremities, was every man even of sense endowed with equal penetration?—Many, I believe, as quick-sighted as yourself, and as
much

Much the friends of universal liberty, trembled for the event. They did not indeed doubt that America would be severed in the end from the mother country, but they could not so easily calculate what might be the immediate effects of the almost unparalleled forces which this country employed against it. Neither could they foresee that happy series of blunders and absurdity which marked the operations of the British Ministry, and which contributed, at least as much as arms, to bring the affair so speedily to a decision. They knew they had much to expect from the genius of Lord - - - - ; but they did not exactly comprehend the full extent of his abilities. That wise procrastination of events in their own nature inevitable ; that judicious mixture of precipitance and delay, of firmness and pliability ; so constantly misapplied that it is scarcely possible to attribute it wholly to the common principles of ministerial dulness ; that lethargy that slumbered over every opportunity ; that activity which never failed to succeed its irremediable loss ; that plausibility which never deceived, and that fortitude which never imposed ; were happy strokes of the sublime in his lordship's character, which required a full series of seven years to develop to the public.

Pardon me, my lord, a digression which the

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consideration of such unequalled merit draws from my unwilling pen. The noble character which I have been describing, has done much for politicians and historians, and he deserves all that they can bestow.

But if the prospect of distant events is in its own nature so obscure as generally to elude or dazzle the strongest sight, is it from the avowed friends of liberty that we are to expect every degree of ridicule and imputation upon those who dedicate their lives to its preservation?—The present, it is too generally known, is no common or trifling æra. A great and mighty nation, shaken by successive strokes, totters upon its foundations. The noblest constitution in the world “is squirted to death by Eton boys.” “Parliament, to which it is natural to have recourse in times of difficulty and danger, is, I fear, fallen too much into the public contempt to be of any material service. It is, I doubt, too generally looked upon as a body of men without any fixed principles of right and wrong; a weathercock, that obeys each blast of court or popular favour, which ever of them is uppermost *.” The inevitable conclusion that follows from the premises laid

* Argument to prove, &c. by John, Earl of Stair, p. 33.

down by the greatest calculator in the nation, is, "*That the state is a bankrupt, and that those who have trusted their all to the public faith, are in very imminent danger of becoming (I die pronouncing it) beggars*†." It is true, indeed, your lordship adds, if nothing effectual is done to prevent these consequences. But whence is this *something effectual* to arise? You have already decried all parties, and have described the wisdom and virtue of parliament too exactly to induce us to expect it from that honorable house. Nothing, therefore, remains, but the euthanasia of the constitution, towards which you seem to cast a longing eye; the mild despotism which has escaped your pen, that is to indemnify us for all our losses, extend the present *narrow* bounds of public credit, and prepare us for new wars, with all their baneful attendants.

Were I inclined to imitate your lordship's candour, I might pronounce all this, as you do of the wishes and exertions of the people, "*mostly impracticable nonsense.*" But I respect your lordship more than you seem to do the sincerest friends of their country. In such a state of things, we can no longer be called upon

† Argument to prove, &c. p. 32.

to content ourselves with the common beaten tracts of political corruption and ministerial cunning. Even the advocates of arbitrary power, since they have abandoned their *jus divinum* and hereditary right in favour of the house of Hanover, and even your countrymen, since they have transferred their attachment from the name of Stuart to that of Brunswick, make protection and obedience inseparable terms. In the present state of things, we seem to be almost as much abandoned by our governors, as we formerly were by the Romans, to our own internal strength. The land-marks of the constitution are all removed, and, were we as slavishly inclined as the antient Cappadocians, who desired a king because they could not conceive the possibility of governing themselves, we know not how to obey, because it is not determined who is to command. Your lordship, indeed, comes forward with a charitable zeal, and offers us a tyrant. This, perhaps it may be observed, is no new present from your country ; but almost a century of civil contests and desolations, of private miseries and public executions, of controverted titles, and the last extremes alternately dared and suffered by a noble nation, have made us rather cautious how we accept the boon. Let us, in the mean time, try what

can be effected by methods more adapted to the genius and spirit of the English people. No nation was ever deserted by heaven or fortune till it was first deserted by itself; and the annals of our history may lead us to hope that we are never nearer to our deliverance than when a feeble mind sees nothing around but horror and despair.

MARIUS.

LET-

LETTER V.

TO THE

Right Honourable the EARL of STAIR.

My LORD,

HE that disinterestedly dedicates his life to the public service, if such a character can be allowed to exist, is, unless virtue be thought its own reward, more to be pitied than every other description of men. In the course of his labours, he will be obliged successively to attack, if not to join, every party of the great and powerful; and as the malice has always been allowed to exceed the gratitude of our fellow-creatures, he will have much more to expect from the revenge of those he quits, than from the patronage of those with whom he leagues.

Were a prudent man, therefore, to form a silent and reflected scheme of making his fortune

ture by the public, he would naturally attach himself to one of the reigning parties into which this miserable country is divided. It matters not whether the engagement be formed in the hour of triumph or disgrace. Success naturally expands the heart; and defeat has a wonderful tendency to increase the powers of sensibility. A routed faction is never squeamishly nice in admitting friends, or a victorious one in converting enemies. What wonders have we not already seen performed during the administration of Lord North! What additional miracles still attend him in his disgrace!

There are, my lord, who have imagined you composed of such stubborn materials as resist all the alchymy of modern statesmen. The liberal, the merited abuse you have so repeatedly heaped upon ministers and parliaments, seemed to point you out as one of the few unvitriifiable substances which no political flux could mollify. But I have attended, with that prudent jealousy which ever accompanies a long experience of mankind, to the progress of your political career. I have discovered, or fancied that I discovered, "a method in your madness;" a prudence which rarely accompanies violent passions, but which has never failed to temper the ebullitions

litions of your zeal. When in the midst of all your resentment of public wrongs, and even in the more sincere complaint of private injuries, I observed that caution which always distinguished accurately between the sovereign and the minister, I began to think it possible, that all these blunt professions of rugged honesty might mean as little as the tropes and figures of the opposition. Nothing can be more illiberal than national reflections. I admire the industry, the ingenuity, the bravery of your countrymen; but I suspect their patriotism. Rochefaucault observes that the character of every country is as indelibly stamped upon the manners of the individual, as its accent is upon his pronunciation. Will your lordship pretend to constitute the exception?

I anticipate what may be alleged, in your defence. It will be observed that duty to the sovereign was never yet reputed treason against the constitution. All the scurrilities which disgrace the press will be produced, from the invectives of the North Briton, down to the pointed malevolence of Junius. But is there no medium between the ruffian and the parasite? Can your lordship conceive no modification of the English language which does not

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terminate either in licentious abuse, or interested flattery?

This nation has been too repeatedly deceived not to preserve an active jealousy. We view the lion's den, and we are obliged to exclaim with the fox in the fable, "*Vestigia nulla retrorsum.*" Not every one that comes to us in the name of the constitution, can be now admitted to the rank and consequence of a patriot. It is one of the characteristics of the latter times, that there shall arise false prophets, and false teachers, that shall deceive even the elect. Since, therefore, you have as yet produced no miracles, nor even pretended to the power of working them, we must try your spirit, not by the marvels you perform, but by the doctrines you preach.

There is, my lord, a certain species of profession, a fashionable cant, which is with justice suspected by every discerning mind. It has been one of the greatest misfortunes of the present reign, that strong professions of loyalty and personal attachment have always prevailed over every other species of political merit. The observation is stale, but it is true, that kings are forbidden by nature to have a friend. Is it their blessing, or their curse, that they are seldom acquainted

acquainted with this great truth, till it is too late to profit by the discovery ?

The real and disinterested friend of his country is indeed loyal, but it is loyalty of another stamp which he professes, and which is the principle of his actions. His allegiance to the prince is founded upon the consideration that royalty is an essential part of that constitution which is the object of all his care and reverence. He considers not the person, but the office of the king. The one is frequently not more respectable than the meanest of his subjects, while the other is immortal and unchangeable. The respect, therefore, which he bears to the throne will never degenerate into any idolatry for the individual who is seated upon it. If he is ready to defend its just rights and prerogatives, it is because those rights and prerogatives constitute the English constitution ; and that constitution, with all its defects, is more favourable to public happiness and liberty, than any other which could be adopted. In office, he will treat his sovereign with respect, and perform his orders with alacrity and zeal ; so long as those orders contribute to the public benefit, and are consistent with public liberty. He will endeavour to preserve unsullied the noblest of the royal prerogatives, the power of pro-

moting merit and rewarding virtue. Far from him that abject spirit of monopolization, which seizes upon royal favour, as it would do a private patrimony, and prostitutes it to family connections and party leagues. Far from him that servile spirit of flattery, which confounds the office of minister and laureate, and degrades the ruler of a powerful nation into the obsequiousness of a court buffoon. He will endeavour to make the sovereign worthy of the noblest panegyrics; but he will teach him to expect them not from the corrupt echoes of a court, but from the unbiaſſed acclamations of a grateful people:

Alike undaunted amid the tempeſts of popular clamour and factious oppoſition, he will keep his eye fixed upon that ſacred mean which conſtitutes the ſecurity of ſovereign and people. Should there be a meaſure which his ſuperior genius points out as neceſſary to the public ſafety, he will boldly adopt it; deſpiſing alike the arts of deſigning men, and the empty prejudices of a multitude. He will truſt to the uniform integrity of his own conduct for a vindication; and to time, which as neceſſarily eſtabliſhes the ſolid fabrics of truth as it ſweeps away the empty ſystems of falſehood. His fame, he knows, is not the tranſitory beam of either
royal

royal or popular favour ; it is the result of a whole series of consistent actions directed to one great end, and proceeding from one common principle.

That principle may teach him to oppose the encroachments of faction upon the royal prerogative ; but it will teach him to oppose, with ten-fold zeal, those temporary paroxysms of delirium which tempt a deluded people to lay their privileges at a master's feet. In the first case, they may indeed endanger all, by grasping at too much ; but in the second they give up all, even without the hope of an equivalent. Is the sovereign virtuous ? He will be the last either to persuade or to accept the sacrifice. Is he possessed with the common rage of encreasing his power ? That day which yields the constitution up to his discretion, renders him a tyrant, and destroys the nation.

In what language, therefore, would such a man address the first magistrate of his country, were it necessary to approach the throne ? With respect and modesty, but with firmness ; with reverence, but with truth. He would leave the interested professions of personal attachment and veneration to those who meant to betray the people by flattering the sovereign, or to expose the sovereign himself by soothing the common

prejudices of his station. Should he see the nation almost undone by a disastrous war, in which a favourite and protected administration had borne a principal share, he would not make his commiseration of injured royalty the capital figure of the piece. Well knowing that the sovereign and his family are always the last to feel the weight of public misery, he would reserve his pity for the thousand innocent objects which deserve it better. Could he weep tears more fast or precious "than the Arabian tree", there would not be one to bestow on every victim of such a war as the American has produced. If he is feelingly alive to the temporary embarrassment of a *royal hart* held for a moment at bay, what must he feel for whole provinces that have been for seven years the prey of the bloodiest hunters that ever followed the chace of death? What must he feel for a thousand gallant veterans that line our streets, deform our public ways, and present in vain their wounds, their poverty, their incurable diseases, to those in whose pernicious cause they have contracted them? What must he feel for a nation like the English, which is, with all its faults, one of the most gallant, generous, and deserving in the universe, reduced to universal beggary by a contest which never was national; in a dispute which never interested the public?

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The royal children, my lord, have never yet wanted bread *, and Heaven forbid they should ever incur that necessity ! They live in the midst of a nation that is sufficiently disposed to share its own last morsels with its rulers. But perhaps it might be more discreet in a loyal subject, to keep the hydra debts of the civil list, that “bougeon” so repeatedly, though lopped and seared so often, and the necessity of incurring new expences, from the public view. Even Lord A——n’s declaration in favour of a *manly and spirited prince* has met with few admirers. Accustomed as we are to bear, with a degrading patience, the vices and follies of our rulers, we have not yet learned to believe that they add more to the glory than to the happiness of the people ; and in our present circumstances, we should willingly exchange the lustre of such a triumph for the more sober advantages of order and œconomy.

M A R I U S.

* “The king is forced to take the very bread from his children’s mouths.” Argument to prove, &c. p. 12.

LET-

LETTER VI.

TO THE

Right Honourable the EARL of SHELBURNE.

My LORD,

IF praise be ever agreeable to a delicate taste, it is when it ascends pure and unsuspected; such an offering as an honest mind may bestow, and a generous one accept without a blush. This is what your lordship has been little accustomed to receive during the short period of your political triumphs, and what you are too well acquainted with the world to expect during your disgrace. But,

“When interest calls off all her sneaking train,

“And all the oblig’d desert and all the vain:”

then is the hour for the impartial man to come forward, and declare his sentiments. Nor can you be more surpris’d at this address, which you certainly have never paid for, than I am, to find a single action in a minister worthy of unbought applause. But it appears to me an unpardonable weakness to be more afraid of commending

mending merit than of censuring vice. I therefore seize the moment, when I find myself able to approve the conduct of a minister, lest it should not return.

When, in the beginning of the year 1782, we beheld the dissolution of Lord North's administration, you have not forgotten the general triumphs of the nation. It was not only the capricious love of novelty, however universal may be the principle; it was the involuntary intoxication of a whole people, that, wearied with its miseries, expected some relief from a change of masters. Besides, the very nature of the circumstances had created in the nation an unusual disposition for confidence. The spirit of opposition had raged so long in vain, that it had drawn the bonds of political union tighter than common between the multitude and their leaders. With whatever contempt the illustrious characters that compose the House of Commons are accustomed to treat their constituents, a variety of causes had concurred to produce a temporary relaxation.

The reigning faction could not be ignorant that it was dangerous to reduce even slaves to desperation; and a ten years bitter abstinence from all the sweets of power and emolument had taught their opponents the necessity of condescending to cajole the people. Hence arose
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those meetings and associations throughout England ; popular dinners and popular harangues ; fervent professions and unsubstantial promises ; with all the train of amorous lies and perjuries, by which our unsuccessful statesmen are accustomed to ensnare a fond, believing multitude. And so thoroughly were they deceived, that they had entirely forgotten that almost invariable law of nature, by which a minister is compelled to contradict all that he had ever promised when out of place. They perhaps imagined that something was to be expected from the unparalleled extremities to which the whole nation was reduced. They thought that a rational self-interest might for once supply the place of virtue, and convince their friends of the utility of preserving some appearance of honour and consistency. Men that were obtruded against the consent of the sovereign might perceive the importance of cultivating the esteem of the people. There was too a sort of religious sanctity attached to the remembrance of common dangers and the ties which they had produced. The pilfering Arab, although inured to spoil and carnage, will spare the wretch that has once claimed the hospitality of his roof : and who could tell but English patriots might so far adopt the example, as for once to *spare their friends* ?

But

But there is a sublimity which distinguishes certain minds, although it must ever escape the conceptions of the vulgar. Doomed to the uniformity of private life, they find it difficult to conceive what is placed beyond the reach of common experience. They have indeed a gross and confused suspicion that the inflexible patriot may be gradually softened into the cringing courtier, or the rapacious minister; and that the warmest advocates for liberty may at length incline to the solid blessings of arbitrary power. But these changes they imagine will be the effect of time and solicitation. They look for the common formalities of gradual corruption, and think it hardly possible that their warmest friends should become their most determined enemies, without passing through the medium of neglect and indifference.

But these are prejudices which are now happily removed for ever; and I will venture to assert that the greatest master of political versatility will find it difficult hereafter to attract applause or surprize an audience. Proteus himself, were he now to visit our island, must own himself outdone, even at his own weapons, and confess the superiority of some of our modern practitioners. Although a god, there were certain ties which could hold him fast, and at

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length compel him to assume his own, after he had run through every other shape. What would he have said to mere mortals, who escape from every tie and put off every character at will?

But, my lord, I am wandering wide of the intended mark. The task which I have proposed to myself is that of collecting facts, and presenting sober reason to my countrymen; and I hasten to fulfil it. However eager, however general were the expectations of the people at the change of ministers which took place in the spring of 1782, they were most bitterly disappointed. The unfortunate death of the Marquis of Rockingham, which so speedily ensued, was the signal for breaking up that administration, which twenty years had scarcely matured, and from which the nation expected its deliverance. I, indeed, had not been one of that sanguine body. Perhaps my dulness or malevolence rendered me less clear-sighted in respect to the expected blessings. My acquaintance with general history, as well as my experience of mankind, had taught me to believe too generally perhaps of public men, that, whatever might be their professions, their aim was nothing but self-interest. I was not so partial to the spirit of the age as to believe it very prolific in superior characters.

characters. When I considered the formal professions and the apparent strength and discipline of our parties, they might appear sufficiently formidable; but when, after the example of Agesilaus*, I separated them into their respective classes, I found the number of genuine patriots surprizingly diminished. I did not therefore expect to see the golden days, of which so many dreamed, renewed or realized, even under a genuine Whig administration; which had been the Panacea so industriously held forth for every national disease. But I must confess I expected more from the good

* When Agesilaus commanded the allied army of the Grecians in an expedition into Asia, he was reproached for the small comparative number of Spartans which he had brought with him. He, therefore, took an opportunity, at a general review, of proclaiming that all who practised the trade of carpenters should leave their arms, and go to a particular spot. Many of the allies, who had been brought up to that trade, accordingly quitted the ranks, but not a single Spartan. In this manner he went through every mechanical trade, till the ranks of the allies were almost reduced to nothing, while those of the Spartans had suffered no diminution. "See now," said he, to those who had before murmured, "on which side the balance preponderates: you bring into the field a numerous band of tradesmen and mechanics; but it is Sparta alone that furnishes soldiers."—Probably the author was considering the effect which would be produced upon a certain honorable house by a similar proclamation.

sense and abilities of those gentlemen than has been yet performed. I, indeed; foresaw that all the boasted schemes of reformation would end in appropriating the honours and emoluments of the state to themselves and their creatures; but I thought something might have been done for the nation in points where the immediate interest of ministers was not concerned. I imagined the first object of a set of men, who came into power upon the express condition of restoring peace, would be to realize the expectations of the public in that particular. I thought too something might be done to heal the wounds which war had made, and to regain the commercial confidence of the Americans; not by sacrificing the interest or honour of the nation, but by a rational consideration of what its necessities required*. In respect to the additional burthens which every discerning man knew must be imposed, I thought that some regard might be shewn to commerce, to policy, and even to the inclinations of a people that had already borne so much, and with such unparalleled patience.

* This subject has been lately most sensibly and forcibly treated in a pamphlet, by Brian Edwards, Esq.

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But, it seems, these expectations, moderate as they may appear, were doomed to be disappointed in a manner which it was impossible to foresee. The premature death of the Marquis of Rockingham broke down the isthmus which separated the hostile factions of the cabinet, and let in the contending tides. I was most sincerely grieved for that premature death, and lamented it perhaps as truly, though not as indiscreetly, as some of his friends. I did not indeed attribute any very extensive range to the political abilities of the noble personage, and I always dreaded the fascinations of party; but he appeared to be a man of amiable and unblemished manners, a promoter of agriculture and industry, and a sincere friend to what he conceived to be the real interests of his country. Above all, fortune had made him the central point which supported a mighty arch; an arch indeed more destined to record the triumphs of a party than the happiness or liberty of a nation; but such an one as could not be then destroyed, without threatening to involve both in the wide compass of its ruin.

I know not what were the exact feelings of the nation, when they first heard of that fatal and irreparable breach in the cabinet, but I will take the liberty of describing my own. What-
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ever credit I might give to the understandings of the two honorable gentlemen who set the example of resignation, I did not think that conduct afforded a very favourable specimen of either their heads or hearts. I could not conceive that a real friend to any interest of his country would take that opportunity of wreaking his personal spite, at the expence of the public. Unanimity I had heard echoed, at every public meeting, by every subaltern of the party, till I was sickened with the sound. Was it then a time, in such an awful moment of national crisis and danger, to perplex the public councils with the low interests and cabals of faction, at the expence of that very unanimity which had till then been the *word* of the whole party? The public at large can scarcely pretend to decide the paltry quarrels of courts and cabinets; but they felt, that if there was ever an hour when an honest man would have conceded something for the general good, it was the present; and they cared not who was prime minister, provided he gave them peace.

I am almost afraid your lordship will hardly excuse the style of even this panegyric: if you do not, I can easily conceive in what manner it will be received by others. But this is the language of truth; and these are the senti-
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ments of every independent man throughout the kingdom with whom I have conversed.

But when the session was opened with that memorable speech which has been so much the subject of altercation, I could not help feeling something like surprize at the manner in which it was received. Had the lower house been peopled indeed with inveterate republicans, I should have been less surprized at the spirit which guided those memorable debates : but when I saw those very gentlemen, who had so lately given specimens of their extraordinary talents for abject flattery, dealing out the most unmannerly invectives, I could not help blushing for human nature and my country.

In spite, however, of virulence, scurrility, and opposition, the peace was ratified by the same honorable gentlemen whose consciences would not suffer them to approve it. Common minds, indeed, did not comprehend the full force of those subtle distinctions. They thought that if the peace was pernicious and dishonorable, it merited the public opposition of the house. They thought it as much an object of parliamentary interference, as the nomination of a new minister, the first, and most undoubted prerogative of the crown. The nomination of

an improper minister may be indeed eventually destructive to a nation ; but it is not a measure which requires such immediate interference. A virtuous and independent house of commons, like the present, may always arrest him in his career ; they always possess the dreadful artillery of impeachments, of which they have made so liberal an use during this whole century ; they may at any time send forth their thunders, and hurl him flaming down. But an inadequate and dishonorable peace may reduce the nation, in an instant, to such extremities, as may render all future exertions vain.

But the peace was to be reprobated in order to displace the minister. There was even a peculiar advantage in making him the sacrifice of the only salutary measure which this country has seen during the last twenty years. Even in the hour of triumph and exultation, no peace which is upon record has ever satisfied the expectations of the nation. How then was it possible that a peace, which was to ratify the eternal divorce of America, and which must therefore be attended with some humiliation to this country, could please the wild imaginations of the people ; a people who had suffered enough to sicken them with war, but not enough to make them submit with equanimity

equanimity to the disadvantages of their situation? It is the peculiar misery of human beings never to foresee inconveniences while they may be avoided, or to be able to bear them with patience when they are inevitable.

That the peace was the best which might have been obtained, it is impossible for me to decide. That it included the best terms your lordship was able to procure, may be sufficiently inferred, even from the principles of ambition and self-love: that any of your rivals would have been able to make a better, we have never had a more convincing proof than their own assertions. Such therefore as it is, the merit of it is entirely your own.

Whoever is moderately acquainted with human affairs, will continually lament the blindness both of princes and states. An useless tract of desert, a frozen ocean, a barren rock, may each in turn become the object of jealousy and ambition; may deluge the earth with blood, or cover the sea with carnage. But the solid advantages of peaceful industry, the perfection of internal government, and the improvement of agriculture, are objects that are either overlooked, or rarely suffered to incline the scale. Yet it would not be difficult to prove that there never has existed a nation, which would not

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have been more benefited by applying its attention to these constant sources of happiness and population, than by a series of the most splendid conquests. Yet war is sometimes inevitable; a frantic prince, an ambitious minister, even a favoured parasite, or strumpet, may each alternately endanger the freedom and existence of all the neighbouring states. Every nation must therefore be prepared to defend by arms those rights which may be attacked by arms; and when the contest is once begun, the soundest policy consists in the most vigorous efforts. But when the dispute does not relate either to national safety or independence, but to points of ideal power and speculative ambition; to something which flatters the pride more than it concerns the interest of a nation; above all, when it has originated in the spirit of error, and been carried on by that of delusion, it cannot too soon receive its termination.

That this was the case with the American war, it would now be loss of time to attempt to prove. As to the object of that contest, the minister that brought it on was continually shifting his ground; but, whatever was the pretext, it always implied the subjection of the colonies. When this too, like all the rest, had deserted him; when that subjection had been given up
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by every party as impracticable, the spirit of infatuation itself could scarcely invent a reason for continuing the war, the instant a tolerable peace was attainable. If there has been a set of men in this country sufficiently blind, and adverse to their country's interests, to attempt to continue it, your lordship will never blush to reckon them in the number of your enemies.

As to most of the reasons which I have heard alleged, they disgrace even the logic of the house of commons. So very contemptible and scanty were they, that even the unhappy loyalists have been dragged into the question, by the very persons that had so frequently represented them as the vile incendiaries of the war. That the situation of many of these unhappy men is truly pitiable I do not deny; that they deserve well of the government, whatever they may do of the nation, is equally certain: but that it was necessary to carry on the war upon their account alone, I think the spirit of party itself will hardly venture to assert. If it was impracticable to conquer America for the British sovereign, or the British parliament, did it cease to be so, when attempted in the name of the loyalists? Or will any one dare to assert that any thing, short of conquest, could have forced the Americans to admit them to what they had lost. If

therefore they wished to be restored to their native country, it was evident that a single year of peace would operate more in their favour, by abating the animosity of their countrymen, than could have been effected by half a century of arms. If they only desired a compensation for their losses, the saving of a dozen or twenty millions in the national expenditure, would nearly have paid the bill, though it had been indorsed by all their friends in the opposition.

But what shall we reply to the heavier charges of national disgrace, incurred by the cession of a barren waste, or a narrow island, to our enemies? Simply this, that public honour will always be better preserved by augmenting the power, than by adding to the weakness of a nation. The relative strength of every nation can never be long a secret to its neighbours; and the opinion which they entertain of this particular, will always be the measure of the respect which they shew, not the detail of past achievements, or the vain remembrance of a prowess it can no longer boast. If this principle be true, it is evident, that great Britain, if doomed to lose the colonies, became actually more formidable the instant a peace had taken place, than she had been at any moment since the confederacy of so many nations against her.

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The power of every state is merely relative, and must be estimated not by any universal standard, but by the comparative force of its neighbours. It is evident that during all the latter years of the war, however great might be the efforts of this country in themselves, they were inadequate to the object proposed: they were inadequate to the conquest of America; they were even inadequate to the defence of all our own possessions. But why were they inadequate? Merely for the same reason that Horatius was inferior to the united force of his three enemies, though singly more than a match for either. A confederacy had been formed against this country, such as we have no precedent of in the annals of our history; such as it will be our own fault, if we are doomed to encounter a second time. Would it not have been reputed a master-stroke of policy to have been able to detach a single member of that confederacy from the rest, and to have decreased the superiority of our enemies? Mr. Fox is said to have tried the experiment with Holland, and your lordship with America: we have great reason to be thankful that both the attempts were abortive.

But, in giving us peace, you effected infinitely more than it was possible to do by any other means.

You

You broke to pieces, at a stroke, that vast colossus of a league which threatened to crush us with its weight, and scattered the fragments abroad to all the winds. You gave us time to repair the ruined state of our finances by the admirable bills of reform which Mr. Burke has introduced ; and to regain the friendship of America by the salutary proclamations of last July. And if the affairs of India had been as wisely and equitably settled as they were intended by Mr. Fox's bill, some part of the glory must have been due to you, who prepared the way, by removing every obstruction.

Where then is the loss of national honour ? If national honour consist in such a mass of force as is singly superior to all that can be brought against it, such national honour never has yet existed. It did not exist even in the proudest times of the Roman commonwealth ; since no one can doubt that the art of dividing enemies and postponing wars contributed, no less than arms, to the establishment of their greatness. To look for it in the nicely-balanced system of contrary forces which now compose the state of Europe, would be the extreme of folly ; since the very stability of that state is confessedly owing to the power of opposing the ambition of one nation by the union of all the rest. Why then should the English people desire impossibilities,

impossibilities, which, even could they be realized, would end in their own destruction; since every human power, which becomes too mighty for resistance, must necessarily produce every species of internal disorder and corruption?

But whether they persist in the pursuit of this chimerical greatness, or bound their wishes with the solid enjoyment of national happiness and security, it is demonstrable that peace was necessary for either object. A war, in which we were so evidently overmatched, and the continuance of which exhausted our national resources so fast, without any adequate means of supply, could never have given us that decided superiority which the successes of Lord Chatham himself had failed to do. Peace therefore became necessary, were it only in the view of promoting the objects of our own ambition.

But the honour of a nation is not to be rated by the chimerical standard of its being singly able to stand against the world in arms, or by a ruinous obstinacy in pursuing impracticable projects. It is to be rated by the opinion of its wisdom and justice, joined with such a degree of power as renders it secure from every probable attack: and all these objects were more attainable by peace, than by the bloodiest continuance of the
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the war. Our wisdom can never be impeached by putting an end to a ruinous contest which had no longer an object; our justice, by desisting from injuring the Americans and the Dutch; or our power, by ceasing to lavish our blood and treasures as unprofitably as we had hitherto done.

And if we possessed sufficient power to carry on the war for several future years, will any of those resources be diminished by the peace? Will they not, on the contrary, be continually increasing, unless our late infatuation is doomed to attend us to the last? By the equity and moderation of our public counsels we certainly may prevent the possibility of such a league as we have lately escaped; and which of our neighbours will *singly* chuse to encounter a nation that has been so nearly equal to all combined?

These, my lord, are the reflections of an impartial man upon the peace which you have given us. In every point of view it rises upon the understanding, and is brought home to our conviction. If the arguments I have used be just, they may tend to diminish the remaining prejudices of our countrymen, and to rescue one action of a minister from the general infamy which awaits the tribe. If they be, on the contrary, false, and liable to be refuted, the malice of your enemies

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is not so much assuaged, as to allow them any permanent triumphs. And while your lordship will escape the ridicule of employing so weak an advocate, I shall deservedly engross the whole disgrace of the undertaking, who,

“Nec Dīs, nec viribus, æquis,”

have engaged a volunteer in such a cause.

M A R I U S.

L E T T E R VII.

TO EDMUND BURKE, Esq.

SIR,

IT is not without a diffidence proportioned to your great abilities and fame, that in the course of my labours I address myself to you.

. . . . But if I must contend,
Best with the best . . . more glory will be won,
Or less be lost.—

And there is a passage in your own speech of the first of December last which emboldens me to the attempt, and makes me triumph over the consideration of my own inferiority. You observe, sir, “ that nothing is to be found in any habits of life or education, which tends wholly to disqualify men for the functions of government, but that by which the power of exercising those functions is very frequently obtained; I mean a spirit of low cabal and intrigue, which I have never, in one instance, seen united

with

with a capacity for sound and manly policy*." If this, sir, is any criterion, I can appeal to my own heart, and solemnly declare that I am as little connected with any cabal or intrigue, as any one in your own virtuous and independent majority; as little as yourself, Lord North, and Mr. Fox.

But before I begin to state the observations with which I intend to trouble you, I will take the liberty of settling the limits within which our controversy will be confined. I do not mean to expatiate in the wide field of accusations which are brought against the East-India company: I cannot pretend to be prepared by "three years of laborious parliamentary research," or armed with the artillery of secret committees; whose reports are now the unerring dictates of truth, though in the year 1781 they were "the cursed Pandora's box, whence sprung out that dreadful calamity, the American war." These laurels, sir, are all your own; they have been dearly earned, and it would be equal temerity and injustice to disturb you in their possession. My labours will be of an humbler nature: they will be confined to those points in which every citizen may with propriety pretend to form a judgment, the conduct of our representatives,

* Mr. Burke's Speech on the first of December, 1783, p. 11, printed for Doddsley.

in meddling with the affairs of the East-India company; the virtue of the attempt, and the wisdom of their proceedings.

A person so intimately acquainted with human life and literature, as I confess you to be, cannot be ignorant that it is one common art of every accuser to excite the indignation of his audience, by every method within his power. When once their passions are thoroughly raised by a recital, whether real or fictitious, of crimes and horrors, it becomes easy to give the storm whatever direction he wishes. Instead of being upon our guard against the suggestions of our heated imaginations, instead of scrutinizing the pretended evidence with a degree of doubt and accuracy proportioned to the enormity of the case, we are too apt to accept of violence and exaggeration instead of proof. Our very prejudices and indolence, in this case, assume the form and dignity of virtue; and at length the sober dictates of caution and impartiality are utterly discarded, or treated as enemies, that would seduce us from our duty.

It is no wonder, sir, if this should be particularly true of the noble audience that listened to your Philippic. Men of such severe and unblemished manners could scarcely be expected to preserve a due and necessary moderation at such a tale

tale of complicated horrors. Whatever could add either pathos or energy to the description was certainly introduced. Here was the great Mogul—"the descendant of Tamerlane, a personage as high as human veneration can look at," unless perhaps it be the godlike mover of the bill, "standing in need almost of the common necessaries of life*." Here was Seraja Dowla sold to Mir Jaffair, Mir Jaffair to Mir Cossim; and Mir Cossim to Mir Jaffair again †. Then to shew that the rage and cruelty of the East-India company's servants know no exceptions of sex, or no sex, we are told a moving history of outrages offered to ladies,

* "The first potentate sold by the company for money was the great Mogul—the descendant of Tamerlane. This high personage, as high as human veneration can look at," &c.—Speech, p. 17.

"The descendant of Tamerlane now stands in need almost of the common necessaries of life."—Ibid. p. 18.

This fact is most satisfactorily explained in many of the publications in answer to Mr. Burke, particularly in the writings of Major Scott. But what does it add to the atrocity of the action, that the great Mogul is the descendant of Tamerlane? Tamerlane himself was a robber and a spoiler, and more destructive to mankind than pestilence, famine, or even the East-India company.

† Speech, p. 19.

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and even to eunuchs ‡. The story itself of Ursula and her eleven thousand virgins is almost paralleled in that of the nabob of Oude, his two thousand women, the two seraglios more of his near kindred, and the nabob's fourscore children §.

“ Quis talia fando

“ Temperet a lachrymis ?”

It is true, sir, that you had like to have spoiled all again by the mention of the venerable “ grandmother and the ancient household :” this circumstance was too powerful for the muscles of the younger members. But even the great Scriblerus sometimes touched the improper string ; and when you sum up all, by complimenting the house upon their virtue and independency, it was as impossible they should resist, as an ugly woman who hears for the first time commendations upon her beauty.

‡ “ Their chief eunuchs, who were their agents, their guardians, protectors, persons of high rank according to the eastern manners, and of great trust, were thrown into dungeons, to make them discover their hidden treasures ; and there they lie at present.”—Speech, p. 44.

§ “ That family and household consisted of *two thousand women*, to which were added two other seraglios of near kindred, and said to be extremely numerous, and (as I am well informed) of about fourscore of the Nabob's children, with all the eunuchs, the ancient servants, and a multitude of the dependants of his splendid court.”—Ibid, p. 45.

But

But I agree with you, sir, that the present is no season for mirth or levity ; and I never held the opinion that ridicule was the test of truth. The points on which we differ are neither to be settled by raillery nor declamation, but by the sober force of truth and argument ; and to these I return.

You observe, sir, “ that the phrase of the chartered rights of men ” is full of affectation, and very unusual in the discussion of privileges conferred by charters of the present description.” I have always considered the expression in the same light, but for another reason. A charter, if I rightly understand the expression, comprehends certain powers conferred by the king in virtue of his prerogative. The East-India company, I believe, may pretend to this security ; but I should hardly think its advocates would much insist upon them, when they can appeal to authorities of higher importance. The first establishment of the East-India company upon its present basis, was, as you very well know, an act of the whole legislature in 9th and 10th of William and Mary, which engaged to incorporate the lenders of two millions to the government into a company, and invested them with certain exclusive rights. So far were the people of that time from insisting upon their chartered rights, that the parliament denied the power

power of the crown to grant a charter of that description ; and the old East-India company exerted all its influence in vain to procure a parliamentary establishment. And so great was the difference of ideas which then prevailed, that though the old East-India company could claim no other foundation than a royal charter, which had been repeatedly declared insufficient by the commons, though it was contended that its members had been guilty of acts subversive of all the rights which they pretended to, when they were heard in opposition before the lords, yet they were quietly allowed to continue their franchises, till they wisely *coalesced* with the new company in 1702, and put an end to their own separate existence.

✓ The form of that act in 1698, from which the present company derives its establishment, has been the model of all the subsequent ones which the legislature has chosen to pass. But the only clause, which it is now material to take notice of, is that which empowers the government, upon re-payment of the two millions originally borrowed, and giving three years notice after the twentieth of September 1711, to dissolve the said company, and re-assume all the powers with which it had been invested.

Let me now, sir, be permitted to stop for a moment, and consider the nature of the transaction

action which I have just described, and which I believe you will find faithfully copied from the history of those times. Here, then, is a solemn contract entered into by the whole legislature on the one side, and certain individuals on the other, which, in consideration of two millions to be advanced for the public service, settles upon them for a limited time certain exclusive privileges, with an equity of redemption in case it should appear inexpedient to continue those powers beyond the appointed period. Can it be supposed, therefore, that either of these contracting parties was imagined to retain the right of dissolving the agreement, whenever it should judge proper, for reasons of which it was to remain the sole and unaccountable judge? Is it not, on the contrary, one of the most absurd, ridiculous, and unfounded ideas that ever entered into the head of a human being, even into the head of a politician? Where contracts are entered into between one individual and another, there is always some public tribunal which will oppose injustice and enforce their observance: and I believe, till the celebrated receipt-tax of last year, there is scarcely to be found an instance of a government, which did not at least insist upon good faith in its subjects, whatever indulgences it might allow itself.

It is true, sir, that there is one essential dif-

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ference between a government and an individual : an individual may be compelled to the observance of his contract, which cannot be done to the former, unless by a general insurrection of the people and a revolution. But does this make any difference in respect to moral obligations or principles of justice ? Or is a state allowed to act upon those principles, which would indelibly involve every individual in such a web of infamy and disgrace, as would destroy his character for ever ? It may, perhaps, be answered, that this is a liberty in which most governments have occasionally indulged themselves. I grant the fact, and you will perhaps grant the consequences : that most governments have become so universally infamous by the practice, that it is difficult to decide whether they are considered with more abhorrence by foreign nations, or by their own subjects. I have little occasion to insist upon some celebrated manœuvres of this kind in our neighbours ; since there is scarcely a gentleman who voted for the East-India bill, provided he had words enough to make a motion, that has not, in some preceding debate, insisted upon the immense resources of this country in comparison with France, all derived from the consistency of its conduct, and the vast extent of its credit.

I must confess, sir, I have a kind of antiquated
prejudice

prejudice in favour of consistency. I can respect men of every different political opinion, provided they are uniform : but I have never been able to understand that eternal versatility of character which changes public debates into the venal eloquence of wrangling lawyers ; nor can I conceive, by any theory which I think myself allowed to mention, whence it arises that these sudden flashes of new conviction are always found to accompany the immediate interests of the party. The gentlemen, who are known by the general name of the Rockingham party, have always distinguished themselves by their inveterate opposition to every parliamentary reform. According to them, it is infinitely better to suffer the noblest constitution of the world to fall into ruins before our eyes, than to change a single stone in the crumbling edifice, or even to add a prop to support it. I have listened, sir, without conviction, to much reasoning of this kind ; and, though I do not recollect that many gentlemen have chosen to put their names to their elaborate defence of the present system, I have always allowed that they might possibly be in earnest. Were it necessary, I could produce many instances of the infinite contempt they heap upon speculative principles of right and wrong, and visionary systems of reformation, from all the celebrated pamphlets of the party.

But, in the name of God, why do they not adhere to their own principles? Are the repeated agreements which the whole legislature has made with the East-India company of less sanctity than the septennial bill, which even the boldest of your own house has never yet contended to be constitutional; and which not one of you can now defend, without asserting that you have a right to subvert the whole system of government at your pleasure? Or, is it imagined, that the solid opinions of mankind upon the subject of right and justice are to be changed by every temporary blast that turns the state weathercock of your honorable house?

✓ But as to the original act of establishment for the East-India company, it was penned with all the requisite discretion and foresight. It was a new experiment made upon a very important subject of political economy, and therefore the government wisely reserved to itself a power of dissolving the company, in case experience should evince the necessity of doing it. But, if they have never taken advantage of that restraining clause, during the term of almost an hundred years, what are we to infer from this forbearance, excepting that the government found nothing in this company "worthy of death." For my part, I attach so much respect to the honorable house
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of commons, that I cannot easily believe it capable of the grossest contradiction and absurdity. Now, in my humble opinion, it is difficult to admit this new necessity of seizing all the property of the East-India company, and subverting an agreement of the whole legislature, without throwing such insinuations either upon the wisdom or justice of our representatives, as even their most inveterate enemy would scarcely venture.

The last agreement, sir, which is upon record of the government with the East-India company dates no farther back than the spring or summer of the year 1781. Lord North had taken advantage of the approaching expiration of their privilege, to give the requisite notice that he intended to dissolve the company. Had he actually done this, we might have objected to the policy or wisdom of the measure; but certainly no one could consistently have denied the right. But this was by no means done, or perhaps ever intended; and therefore, after a variety of political altercation, an act passed in the same form with all the preceding, to extend the Company's exclusive privileges to the year 1791, in consequence of four hundred thousand pounds paid to the government.

It is here worth remarking, that the majority, which ratified this agreement, was a majority of the

✓ the same house of commons which now exists ;
 and, consequently, I am reduced to the unfortunate dilemma of either believing that the honorable house acquitted the company of all their crimes and delinquencies to the moment when the act passed, or of supposing that so wise, so virtuous, so independent an house could not be ignorant of such a baneful catalogue of crimes, and therefore gravely intended to bite the nation, and swindle the company out of four hundred thousand pounds, upon a pretence which they never intended to realize.

^ I have heard it observed, that a skilful fencer never exposes himself for the chance of hitting his adversary ; yet this seems to be the case of your most eloquent detail of the pretended crimes of the company. ✓ The greater part of these atrocious acts were certainly prior to the year 1781. With what propriety, therefore, with what appearance of justice does the same house of commons found a necessity of rescinding its own deliberate engagements, upon allegations, which it either was, or ought to have been acquainted with, at the very moment when it contracted them?

With all the respect, sir, which we may feel either for you or your audience, how is it possible that any human being should avoid smiling, when he

he hears the privileges of the company attacked upon the principle of their establishing a monopoly, within the walls of that very house, which instituted the monopoly in the last century, and has maintained it by successive sales and contracts throughout the present*? Still more

* "The East-India charter is a charter to establish monopoly, and to *create* power. Political power and commercial monopoly are not the rights of men; and the rights to them derived from charters, it is fallacious and sophistical to call "the chartered rights of men." These chartered rights (to speak of such charters and of their effects in terms of the greatest possible moderation) do at least suspend the natural rights of mankind at large, and in their very frame and constitution are liable to fall into a direct violation of them."—Speech, p. 7.

All this flourish appears to me one of the strongest instances how a good understanding may be abused. If a legislature attempt to sell more than it possesses a right to do, the people may be justified, perhaps, in rescinding an agreement made without their consent, and to their detriment. But what has all this to do with the legislature itself, whose decisions are to be law and justice for all the rest of the community, rescinding its own agreements?—Would not this be a plain confession of ignorance, folly, or injustice, in the very persons who assume to themselves the power of deciding for all the rest? And if this be found to-day, why not to-morrow? If in the last agreement, why not in the next?—Would not this bring the legislature into such extreme contempt as would tend either to tyranny, or to a dissolution of all government?—And is this the noble and excellent spirit of reform which is to be introduced into the English government?—"Unde nefas tantum Latii pastoribus?"—
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more curious is the distinction between the ideas of natural and artificial right. What is it to the buyer, whether the house choose to sell one or the other? He naturally expects to be maintained in what he has fairly purchased. Must no one pretend to enter into a contract with any government, without the interference of Grotius, Puffendorf, and Montesquieu? Or whence do the honorable gentlemen derive their notions of natural right, when they deny to seven millions of people the least interference with the choice of their own representatives?

But what, I wonder, would be said to any man in private life, who, after having voluntarily and deliberately entered into a contract, should pretend to rescind it at will, because it was contrary to his ideas of natural right? Would it not be answered, that this was the silliest pretext by which fraud ever attempted to impose upon credulity? He would be told that he had sufficient leisure to consider the subject, and consult the delicacy of his feelings, before he entered

Let me be pardoned, if I publicly assert, that such an idea is disgraceful to the hitherto untainted reputation of our public faith, and fatal to the confidence which all subjects ought to entertain in the justice of the legislature; worthy only of the spirit of tyranny, and most happily adapted to root out honesty and commerce throughout the kingdom.

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into the engagement: but that little credit would be given to his pretended qualms, when they were evidently dictated by his own interest; that justice and right were never inconsistent with themselves; and that the first duty of both was to fulfil promises and engagements.—But what, if all these scruples should neither tend to a restitution of the rights in question to those from whom they were originally taken, or to any indemnification of their value? Must we not admire the particular delicacy which breaks its own most solemn faith and contract, from the suggestions of conscience, and then finishes by violating those very rights a second time, with as little remorse as it did the first?

For to ~~what~~, sir, do all these declamations about right and monopoly tend? Will the natural rights of every subject in these kingdoms to carry on a commerce with India, be less invaded when the monopoly is given to seven commissioners of the parliament, than while it remained in the directors of the company? Or is there the least alteration made, or pretended to be made, in the actual state of that monopoly?

But the plea of state-necessity, upon which your honorable friend expatiated with so much eloquence, is a topic much more difficult to be

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confuted, because it is so vague and general as scarcely to admit an answer. Were there some inter-mediate power, indeed, to decide between the contracting parties, it might mean something; but in the present case it means no more than that a minister and a majority may, under the subterfuge of general and equivocal terms, violate every engagement they had entered into. For what enterprise can be conceived so openly flagitious and unjust, which may not be justified by the same persons, and upon the same principles? I will engage to produce an act for vesting all the looms of Manchester, or the forges of Birmingham, in seven commissioners, upon the very same principles of state-necessity which make so great a figure in his speech.

A great metaphysician, like you, sir, need not be told, that the expressions of right, justice, charter, contract, necessity, and an hundred more which might be produced, can never in themselves decide a single controversy between two individuals of the human species. All parties allow their existence, and appeal to them in their own favour. Naturally, the understanding of one man has an equal claim with that of any other, to be attended to in the controversy. But as it is evident, that scarcely any dispute would ever be terminated were it to depend

depend upon the entire acquiescence of one party in the reason of another, public tribunals are instituted in every state, for the administration of justice and the termination of differences. In these tribunals, certain individuals are invested with the power of deciding what shall be justice and law in respect to the rest of the society; not from the supposition that one man is naturally more infallible than another, but because this method, however imperfect, is all that can be effected by human prudence. It is possible to ascertain the person, though not the thing; and while there are eternal disputes about law and equity, there is seldom any concerning the person of the judge or chancellor.

To preserve these venerable personages even from the suspicion of corruption; to guard against the surprises of private prejudice or passion; and to divide the different powers in such a manner as mutually to be a check upon each other, has long been the distinguishing boast of our country and constitution. The meanest individual cannot be condemned, without his passing before so many independent authorities as to leave scarcely a supposition of collusion or injustice. First, he must be accused, upon oath before a magistrate, who ought to be a private gentleman of independent fortune.

In the next place, he must be referred to a body of independent gentlemen, who, if they judge the accusation false or groundless, have a right of instantly dismissing it; and these too are sworn to the observance of impartial justice. In the third place, another jury is invested with the power of finally deciding, upon oath, his guilt or innocence; and though the number of this body is only twelve, the criminal may peremptorily except to twenty of those who are returned for the office. These men are expressly to be chosen out of the peers or equals of the accused; that so far from having any interest in his condemnation, they may have the strongest motive to give its proper weight to every plea which can be brought in his favour. The indictment too must be precise and accurate; that no room may be left for the fascinations of eloquence, or the wild suggestions of general and vague accusation; which are seldom employed but to perplex the mind and bewilder the judgment.

These, sir, are the securities which the English law affords to the person of the meanest individual in the kingdom, previous to his being subjected even to the judicial authority: and I have mentioned them thus at length, that the public may contrast them with the proceedings of a certain

tain honorable house in respect to the greatest company of merchants in the universe ; men, who, in whatever light they may be considered by moralists, have done much for the opulence and glory of the kingdom. And I must confess, it strikes me with no little idea of “ the inconstancy of human greatness, and the stupendous revolutions that have happened in our age of wonders,” when I see a set of men, who have just lost thirteen provinces, sitting in judgment upon, and dispossessing those who have added to the British empire “ 281,412 square miles ; which form a territory larger than any European dominion, Russia and Turkey excepted *.”

“ Nunc et oves ultro fugiat lupus : aurea duræ

“ Mala ferant quercus : narcisso floreat alnus.”

Their proceedings have been worthy of the cause ; for, in the confusion of powers and characters which they have assumed to themselves, it is difficult to distinguish any thing of reason, justice, or even of a regular systematic enquiry. First, they chew the cud of evidence and fact in their secret and select committees ; which is afterwards to be brought up again half-digested, and to become the loathsome nutriment of a criminal prosecution. Then, in their judicial character, they sit to determine upon the merits of this very

* Speech, p. 12:

evidence,

evidence, which they have before prepared. The accusers are certain orators of their own body ; who, instead of confining themselves to specific charges, or any of the salutary forms which long experience has established as necessary to the impartial administration of justice, deal out their general invectives, and unsupported accusations, without examining a witness, or even waiting for an answer. Thus is the affair hurried on according to the true principles of summary justice, and brought to a speedy termination ; and then too, the same honorable house assumes its last, and, as its enemies would observe, its most consistent character, that of public executioner ; dispatches the offender in an instant, and seizes upon all his spoils as hangman's wages.

Thus, sir, have I gone through the first part of my disagreeable task, in respect to the celebrated East-India business. One plea, indeed, has been omitted, that of an honorable lord, your late enemy, but present friend and colleague, who justifies the invasion of the company's rights by the precedent of his having already violated them in 1772. The argument, I trust, will make but few proselytes out of his own house ; but it is such an illustration of my subject that I cannot pass it over in silence.

To the English nation, therefore, at large I
must

must recommend the consideration of another species of necessity ; the necessity of watching, with a severe and constant attention, the operations of men who call themselves the representatives of the people, yet are continually setting that people at defiance. They resist, with an inflexible obstinacy, every attempt to bring them nearer to the only purpose for which they exist ; yet there is nothing so remote, or sacred, as to escape the interference of their avarice and ambition. Even the most scandalous outrages, the most unjustifiable attempts upon the rights of others, if once submitted to, are boldly brought forward as precedents, and used as arguments for new ones. If a minister dare something of peculiar atrocity or injustice, "*brevibus gyris aut carcere dignum*," it is railed at by his opponents, but enforced by a majority of his creatures. Supposing the wheel of fortune to turn round, and the friends of the people to grasp the distinctions which they long have aimed at, what is to be expected from their promises and their public spirit ? That they should resign the usurpations of their predecessors, or endeavour to give the nation any security for their liberties ? That indeed would shew a most contemptible ignorance of public men, and the history of parties in this country. But what you may safely expect is that
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they should improve upon all that has been perpetrated by their predecessors, and severely realize the foolish vaunts of a foolish king: "My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins: for whereas my father put a heavy yoke upon you, I will put more to your yoke; my father chastized you with whips, but I will chastize you with scorpions."

MARIUS.

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L E T T E R VIII.

TO EDMUND BURKE, Esq.

S I R,

IF, in the present distracted state of this country, the freedom with which I have considered the conduct of our representatives required an apology, I could use no better one than a quotation from your own celebrated Speech :
 “ They must grant to me, in my turn, that all political power which is set over men, and that all privilege claimed or exercised in exclusion of them, being wholly artificial, and, for so much, a derogation from the natural equality of mankind at large, ought to be some way or other exercised ultimately for their benefit.”

“ If this is true with regard to every species of political dominion, and every description of commercial privilege, none of which can be original self-derived rights, or grants for the more private benefit of the holders, then such rights or privileges, or whatever else you choose to call them, are all in the strictest sense a *trust*; and it is of the very essence of every trust to be

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rendered

rendered *accountable* ; and even totally to *cease*, when it substantially varies from the purposes for which alone it could have a lawful existence *."

I have considered, in my former letter, not so much the pretended abuses in the administration of our East-Indian possessions, of which I confess myself no adequate judge, (though I do not believe nine tenths of your own honorable house more qualified for the decision,) as the method of establishing them, and the jurisdiction of the tribunal before which they are brought. I have attempted to prove, that, in the whole

* Speech, p. 7.—This extraordinary confession puts me in mind of the following story, to be found, I believe, in Pilpay's Fables. A certain man, very uxoriously inclined, had a young and beautiful wife, who always treated him with the most open aversion and disdain ; till one night, spying a thief in the room, she took refuge in the arms of her husband, who was asleep, with such unusual fondness as awakened him. But when the good-man learned the cause of her terrors, he called out in raptures to the thief, who had been alarmed and was moving off, " Pray, sir, stay ! the happiness you have procured me is so great that you are welcome to all I have in return."—This condescension in their representatives is certainly as new to the people of England as was the fondness of the wife to the poor doating husband ; but they do not seem equally grateful : or have they already given so much, that they have no more to bestow ?

proceeding,

proceeding, nothing is to be found worthy the gravity, dignity, or disinterestedness of a British senate ; that nothing could be a greater mockery of all ideas of right and justice, than that the same persons should sit in judgment upon the validity of their own engagements, who had contracted them originally, and ratified them at repeated intervals ; that, if the honorable house pretended to sit as a court of justice, it has not observed a single rule or decorum which could convince the nation of its impartiality ; not even the flimsy forms and punctilios which attended the *quo warrantos* of the last century, or the condemnations of Sydney and Ruffel. It was a species of summary justice which improves upon Asiatic models, and will afford instructions to each succeeding Jefferies for ages. But another consideration equally important remains : supposing the house of commons had been a tribunal ever so well adapted to the enquiry, supposing the guilt of the East-India company to have been ever so clearly proved, what is the nature of the remedy proposed for these disorders, and what the benefit which we may fairly expect from its administration ? For even if all the abuse, which the invention of interest and malice combined have heaped together, should be admitted, it will not follow that the proposed remedy is adapt-

ed to remove the evil, or even to palliate its most alarming symptoms. This examination, sir, will furnish a proper comment for your speech, and may fill up some chasms which I have observed between the premises and the conclusions.

For even supposing certain abuses should have been clearly proved to exist in the administration of the East India Company's affairs, should those abuses also be of sufficient magnitude to justify the interference of parliament, it will by no means follow, that Mr. Fox's pretended bill of reform was either necessary, or adapted to the purpose. But in order to make this arise as an inevitable conclusion, you assume the strangest series of facts that I believe was ever obtruded upon the public. For first you conclude "that this body (meaning the whole body of proprietors), being totally perverted from the purposes of its institution, is utterly incorrigible; and because they are incorrigible, both in conduct and constitution, power ought to be taken out of their hands: just on the same principles on which have been made all the just changes and revolutions of government that have taken place since the beginning of the world."* To assume that any body of people is not only corrupted, but incorrigible, is, to a plain and common understanding, one of the most extraordinary

* Speech, p. 88.

traordinary positions that I think was ever ventured in a serious publication. It should seem, sir, that you hold the doctrine of free-will in so entire and absolute a manner, that you leave no room for the application of new motives to the mind ; or else you fall into the contrary extreme, and assert that the conduct will remain the same, though every principle of action should be changed. Choose which you will of these absurdities ; for they are both before you. Nor is it a common species of corruption alone of which they are accused, such as some ignorant people have attributed to a virtuous majority, the preferring their private to the public interest ; but the more extraordinary one of not only being incapable of regulating their own affairs, but of becoming so by any process that can be operated even by the omnipotence of parliament. Yet this incorrigible body is composed upon the same principles with the Bank, or any other public company that has ever existed ; comprehends many hundred individuals, among whom may be numbered the principal gentry of the kingdom, and the most opulent merchants of the city of London.

I should imagine, sir, that were a foreigner, totally unversed in the party history of this kingdom, to hear so extraordinary an assertion, he
would

would necessarily imagine that the whole preceding history of the East-India company contained nothing but the detail of public frauds and private blunders: more especially, when he reflected upon the repeated generosity which had been used in an arbitrary government, like that of France, to support a similar establishment, he would conclude that the national assistance and generosity here must have been so repeatedly abused as to leave no farther room for pardon or experiment. Necessity, he would observe, may indeed justify, as it occasions every attempt; but it must be a very uncommon kind of necessity that can induce the government of a free state to desert all its usual principles, and to use a discretionary authority with greater rigour than was ever known in an arbitrary one. But what would be his astonishment, when he was told the real history of this oppressed and persecuted company? That, incorrigible as it is now represented to be, and radically corrupted, it had, by its own exertions, obtained a degree of greatness perhaps unparalleled in the history of the world. That its commerce, while it poured into the bosom of the mother-country all the varied productions of the fruitful East, had afforded such ample supplies to its revenue as would alone support the expences of a moderate state. That its
present

present distresses were chiefly the temporary effects of a ruinous and inevitable war, in which it had been involved by the ambition of those very patriots who now exult with a malignant joy over the wounds which they have occasioned, and, instead of binding them up, are hastening to draw forth the vital fluids by the orifice. Its own resources, it would be added, have nursed it up to a degree of power and opulence which awes one portion of the globe, while it excites the envy of all the rest. Although originally intended for commerce alone, it has gradually extended its power and influence, till it has involved the fates of mighty empires, and attracted them to itself. Whatever may be now advanced, by interest or malevolence, about the crimes and incapacity of its servants, is amply confuted even by the unexaggerated detail of events. What stronger evidence can be given of the solid basis upon which any human power is founded, than its capacity to resist and triumph over the mightiest attacks? This, even exclusively, is the boast of the English East-India company. With every disadvantage of difficulty and distance, it has prevailed, not only over the feeble opposition of Asiatic princes, but over all the efforts of one of the most politic and warlike nations in the universe. Could this have been effected without a spirit, both of counsel, and

and of enterprise?—No—whatever may be the representations of parliamentary orators, the world at large will refute the wild and chimerical accusation. Whatever may be the demerits of the company, whatever the catalogue of its crimes, the comparative series of its ministers may certainly vie with that of any modern government of Europe. It has undoubtedly produced warriors of intrepid minds and heroes of immortal fame ; chiefs that have dared, in their employers and country's cause, all that men can dare ; that have executed every thing which the present colleagues of Mr. Burke have *failed* to do. Even now, “on evil days though fall'n, and evil tongues,” it can boast of characters that would do honour to any nation ; the foremost of whom is that very culprit, that seems singly, like an electric rod upon a noble edifice, to have protected the building beneath, while he attracts the fury of the tempest upon himself. Yet even he, “scathed,” as he may appear, by all the lightnings of parliamentary vengeance, nor asks the mercy, nor deprecates the rage of his accusers : he is ready to leave the throne of half the East in order to meet their impeachments ; he bids them take his life, if any thing worthy of death shall be found in his conduct ; nor dare his most inveterate enemies accept the offer.

Is this, sir, the language of party or cabal? If it be, I wish it were oftener heard within the walls of even your own virtuous house. It is the voice of a man who is equally unacquainted with Mr. Hastings and his friends; totally unconnected with the affairs and interests of the East-India company. It is the voice of a man who has never been seen at the levees of either your friends or antagonists; who has never flattered even the people, much as he loves them, in their delusions, or cringed to them for their support. But it is the voice of an independent man, that dares to express his sentiments in defiance of the most powerful faction of this country, and that has a character to hazard upon the stake. As to Mr. Hastings, his abilities are so undoubted, and there is so strong an impression of a great and noble ambition in all his actions, that I cannot help admiring him; and that admiration, I confess, makes me ready to esteem him: I am interested in his fate, and wish to find that he has added the praise of integrity to that of a comprehensive understanding and elevated mind. If ever there was an individual who deserved to have the weaknesses or defects of human nature overshadowed by his triumphs, it certainly is Mr. Hastings; yet, were his achievements and his qualities ten times greater

than they are, I never would interpose to screen him from public justice, if he has deserved it ; on the contrary, I would be the first to mount the rostrum, and arrest him in his triumphal progress, did I live in a country where any punishments were inflicted upon public guilt, or where private virtue might direct the vengeance of the nation. But such as he is, he does not deserve to fall unheard. His fate should be an honorable wound, in fair and equal battle ; not to be trodden down by a base and promiscuous rabble that are only struggling for his spoils. Let him fall hereafter, a victim to the offended genius of Asia, and to the insulted justice of his country ; but let him, while he lives, enjoy the honors and the veneration of an hero. His death, whenever it arrives, will neither disgrace his friends, nor be unworthy of himself ; it will be solemn and lamented, the catastrophe of an awful drama : justice will be expiated and sorrow for the stroke ; it will not refuse the consolation of an honorable interment, or deny a martial trophy to adorn his tomb : it is envy alone that would steal the noble corpse, and hew it out to glut the fury of parliamentary hounds*.

This,

* There are two circumstances essential to every free state ; that no individual should either be elevated beyond the reach of public justice, or condemned unheard. Nothing can be a surer presage of approaching ruin to such a
state

This, sir, like many parts of your own Speech, is declamation ; but it is not, as they are,

state than that degree of power which frustrates all enquiry, or that degree of violence which tramples upon the salutary forms of criminal investigation. The more enormous is the imputed guilt, the more cautious should we be in examining whether it really exist. An unfortunate man, not very long ago, fell a victim to the odium which had been excited by the atrocious nature of the crime alleged against him ; and this must sometimes happen, in spite of the most excellent system of criminal proceedings that any country could ever boast. How cautious then ought we to be in pronouncing upon the guilt of those who are absent, and where the scene of accusation lies in another hemisphere ! I am very ill qualified to decide concerning the merit of Mr. Hastings ; but I am sufficiently qualified to pronounce that not one of the charges against him has yet been proved to the satisfaction of any impartial man : nor is there one of them which has not been denied, and very forcibly, at least very speciously, invalidated. Mr. Burke, in the fervour of his complimentary eloquence, has this passage (p. 81): “ This man, whose deep reach of thought, whose large legislative conceptions, and whose grand plans of policy, make the most shining part of our reports, *from whence we have all learned our lessons, if we have learned any good ones ;* this man, from whose materials those gentlemen who have least acknowledged it, have yet spoken as from a brief,” &c. This passage, I must confess, appears to me a very unfortunate one ; since it seems to place the foundation of all the bitter charges, both against Mr. Hastings and the East-India company, upon the evidence and representations of one gentleman alone, and that gentleman known to have been upon terms of personal enmity with the parties accused. Whatever may be the integrity and abilities of any

are, unsupported by fact or argument. And are the proprietors of the East-India stock to be calumniated with every disgraceful epithet that can sting the heart, or degrade the character of man, merely because they did not recall a minister like Mr. Hastings, at the instigation of what now composes a majority of the commons? On the contrary, it would have been madness to have done it; and it is the strongest proof both of their understanding and their independence, that they have dared to disregard the idle thunders of such a vote, and to follow the dictates of their own better sense. Yet, that they have dared to do this, and to maintain the freedom of their own appointments, in opposition to the sense of the committees of the house of commons, is a sufficient reason for your declaring "that the condition of the company is incorrigible." Strange logic indeed! and a new species of dilemma! Either the whole corporation is at once to resign its legal powers

man, common justice requires that allowance should be made for those passions which are inseparable from human nature; nor are such accusations as are produced in the Speech I allude to, to be admitted upon the testimony of any individual in the universe; still less upon another person's representation, even of that very testimony. For Mr. Burke himself allows, *that he has learned his lesson,* without producing his master.

into

into the hands of a majority of the house, to change the tenour of its proceedings, displace its servants, and manage its commercial affairs by every caprice of men, who, whatever they may know, can know but little of India affairs, or else the punishment of this *audacity** is to be the confiscation of all their privileges, and the forfeiture of all their property. I have heard of an highwayman, that presented a pistol to a gentleman's breast with this apostrophe, "Sir, give me all your money, or else by G—d you'll be robbed." I will not pain your delicacy by the application of the story; but will you please to inform us, where was the crime of the proprietors resisting a vote of the house? If it be a crime, why are they not proceeded against and punished in a legal way? But if it be no more a crime for them to persist in maintaining their own appointment, than it would be in me to keep a footman in defiance of a vote of the house of commons, how can this establish either their corruption or their incorrigibility?

But let me be permitted to analyze your Speech, and, throwing the pomp of metaphor

* "Ever since the beginning of this session, the same act of audacity was repeated."—P. 87.

and allusion aside, to consider the simple facts and arguments which it contains. Neither you, nor any of your honorable friends, can deny that the East-India company have, for a considerable space of time previous to these accusations, managed their affairs with considerable attention and ability. Their prosperity is a sufficient proof of this and the stability of their empire. Now, sir, the whole period which is contained in your accusations scarcely extends to a dozen years. You were their defender in the year 1769, if you are the author of the pamphlet called, "Observations on a late State of the Nation;" and you have defended them as low as the year 1781, if any faith is to be given to the parliamentary Debates. Even in your present Speech you unguardedly allow "the fact is, that for a long time there was a struggle, a faint one, indeed, between the company and their servants* ; of the directors you affirm, "there have been, sir, very frequently, men of the greatest integrity and virtue amongst them†:" yet, after having paraded through an hundred pages of mere declamation and vague accusations, which have been repeatedly answered and contradicted, you gravely con-

* Speech, p. 83.

† Ibid. p. 83.

clude that the whole body both of proprietors and directors is utterly incorrigible; the one for opposing the vote of parliament; the other, I suppose, for yielding obedience to it*. I believe such a conclusion derived from such premises was never before hazarded by a man of your abilities: for what can be inferred even after the most implicit acquiescence in all your charges, not one of which has been authenticated, unless that the servants of the company have for some years past been guilty of misbehaviour, and that the proprietors, piqued, according to your own account †, by the interference

“ * The directors, still retaining some shadow of respect to this house, instituted an enquiry themselves, which continued from June to October; and, after an attentive perusal and full consideration of papers, resolved to take steps for removing the persons who had been the objects of our resolutions.”—Speech, p. 86.—Yet, p. 89, the directors themselves are all wolves. “ He would appoint the wolf a guardian of the sheep; but he has invented a curious muzzle, by which this protecting wolf shall not be able to open his jaws above an inch or two at the utmost.”

May it not be asked whether any person was ever more constantly represented in the light of a wolf, than Lord North by Mr. Burke and all his friends?—Yet a late transaction is a proof that wolves may either change their nature, or be most happily restrained from mischief, by means of a *coalition muzzle*.

† “ Even the attempt you have made to enquire into their practices, and to reform abuses, has raised and piqued them

terference of the commons, have not shewn all due respect to their illustrious vote?

✓ But why must they be for this reason incorrigible? Is not every body of men subject to errors and to passions? Do not a calmer consideration of affairs, and longer experience, frequently point out the necessity of an alteration of conduct? And why might not the same revolution of things take place in respect to them, which we have seen exemplified in the house of commons? For almost twenty years, fir, the nation has heard you and your friends declaiming against venality and secret influence; for almost twenty years, if we can believe your representations, there has been scarcely a measure which has not begun in folly and terminated in wickedness. This is a longer space of reprobation than what you have alleged against the East-India company. Yet see how time, in its silent progress, accomplishes the most stupendous revolutions! This house, which formerly was a den of thieves, is now become the temple of the Lord; “an independent house of

them to a far more regular and steady support.”—Speech, p. 88.—May it not be suspected that resentment against an interference, which they justly thought improper, might act upon the minds of the proprietors, as much as this original sin of corruption?

commons;

commons; an house of commons which has, by its own virtue, destroyed the influence of parliamentary subserviency."†

But as to the idea of any body of men, that is in a continual state of fluctuation, being incurably and necessarily corrupt, the idea is as unphilosophical as the purpose for which it is introduced is unjust. Is it for me, sir, to inform a man, that insists so frequently and with so much pleasure upon his acquaintance with mankind, that every body of men is acted upon by circumstances, and changes its character in unison with the general changes which surround it? Even parliaments have been disinterested and defended the liberties of the people. If they are grown indifferent to these circumstances, it is because the general relaxation of the times admits the depravity; and because faction and intrigue have been discovered to be more effectual ways of making a fortune than virtue or integrity. But should the people once more rouse from their lethargy, and demand a severe account from their representatives, of all the millions which they have squandered, of all the mismanagement which they have connived at; should they for the future insist upon private virtue and public consistency as indis-

† Speech, p. 97.

pensable qualifications, we might perhaps see a change more extraordinary, in a certain honorable house, than any which mark the year 1783.

But as to the defenceless proprietors of East-India stock, it is an equal reflection upon your house to have suffered their crimes and obstinacy so long as you pretend, and to be incapable of correcting it now. All men, in every situation, are naturally guided by the impulse of their own interest; nor does a government ever depend upon the virtue of its subjects, but upon the wisdom of its own regulations. It ascertains the crime, it fixes the mode of prosecution, it establishes the penalty. Look, I pray you, sir, at your own statutes; there you will find a thousand of the most innocent actions in life prohibited under the severest penalties. Men may not consume the product of their own fields, they may not see the light of heaven, they may not steep an handful of barley-corns in water, without the leave of government. Lately you have undertaken that no man shall discharge the duties of common honesty, that not a labourer shall pay his ale-house score, without the interference of government; and rather than fail, you hold out an universal patronage to every villain throughout the kingdom. Do you imagine, sir, that men submit
willingly

willingly and chearfully to these absurd oppressions? No; they curse your parties and your politics *in every tongue*, by every *form of religion*, which prevails throughout the empire. But hard necessity compels, the iron hand of power, and the terrors of impending punishment. Are you able to do all this, and are you obliged to yield to the obstinacy alone of India proprietors; men that are chained down in the midst of the capital; who are every instant exposed to your power, and obnoxious to your vengeance; whose fortunes are the constant pledges of their conduct, and exposed, if they disobey, to all your conscientious encroachments? But pardon me, sir, if I tell you that the whole scheme is such a chaos of absurdity, bad reasoning, and oppression, as never before disgraced a government.

Men will certainly neither yield up their property or their liberty to the pretended necessities of government, so long as they can retain them. But are the reports of the committees to enquire into the frauds practised upon the revenue, a sufficient reason to pronounce that the brewers, the distillers, and the numerous other traders who are now the daily victims of the excise, are become incorrigible; and therefore to invest their shops, their warehouses, their distilleries,

in parliamentary commissioners? Yet the principle is equally applicable; with this difference only, that after some hundred pages of declamation, not a single action has been proved against the East-India proprietors, which does not spring from their undoubted right.

But from the first ill-omened hour, the year 1767*, when the affairs of the company were

• It is worth while to consider the following account of that transaction.—“The East-India company had for a good while solicited the ministry for a negotiation, by which they proposed to pay largely for some advantages in their trade, and for the renewal of their charter. This had been the former method of transacting with that body. Government having only leased the monopoly for short terms, the company has been obliged to resort to it frequently for renewals. These two parties had always negotiated (on the true principle of credit) not as government and subject, but as equal dealers, on the footing of mutual advantage. The public had derived great benefit from such dealing. But at that time new ideas prevailed,” &c. &c.—See the curious passage at length in a pamphlet called, “Observations on a late State of the Nation,” p. 89.

The following perhaps may not be inapplicable to the present times. “In consequence of this scheme, the terrors of a parliamentary enquiry were hung over them. A judicature was asserted in parliament to try this question. But, lest this judicial character should chance to inspire certain stubborn ideas of law right, it was argued, that the judicature was arbitrary, and ought not to determine by the rules of law, but by their opinion of policy and expediency. Nothing exceeded the violence of some of the managers, except their impatience. They were bewildered by their passions, and by their want of knowledge, or want of consideration of the subject.”—Ibid, p. 90.

exposed

exposed to the prophane and licentious eyes of the house, it was easy to foresee how the interference would end, and what was the reformation intended. Neither faith, nor gratitude, nor promises, can bind the rapacity of ministers and their virtuous majorities. In vain might the company plead their merits with the country; the numerous advantages which it continually derived from their commerce; the millions with which it had enriched the public revenue beyond example, almost beyond calculation! when once a government is thoroughly corrupted, wealth and prosperity are crimes against the state, and the name of private right or franchise becomes rebellion. The spirit of despotism is blind as it is intolerant, and the noblest trees of the forest must fall, to save the trouble of gathering the fruit.

This, and not the desire of reformation, has, I fear, guided all the invasions which have been made upon the company's rights; from the famous bill which prevented their sending over supervisors † to examine and correct the state of their affairs, down to the present, which punishes them for the omission, by the confiscation of all their property. To distract their counsels, and

† In the year 1772.

embarrass their affairs ; to continue every abuse, but frustrate every plan of reformation, till loaded with a weight of public odium and private distresses, they might sink for ever into the bottomless gulf of ministerial influence ; has this, sir, been, or has it not, the uniform, un-deviating policy of government ?—While you pause upon this important question, I will take my leave of you for the present, with the intention of renewing our correspondence.

M A R I U S.

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